

JerseyBeat

Issue #61 Winter 1997

Two Dollars

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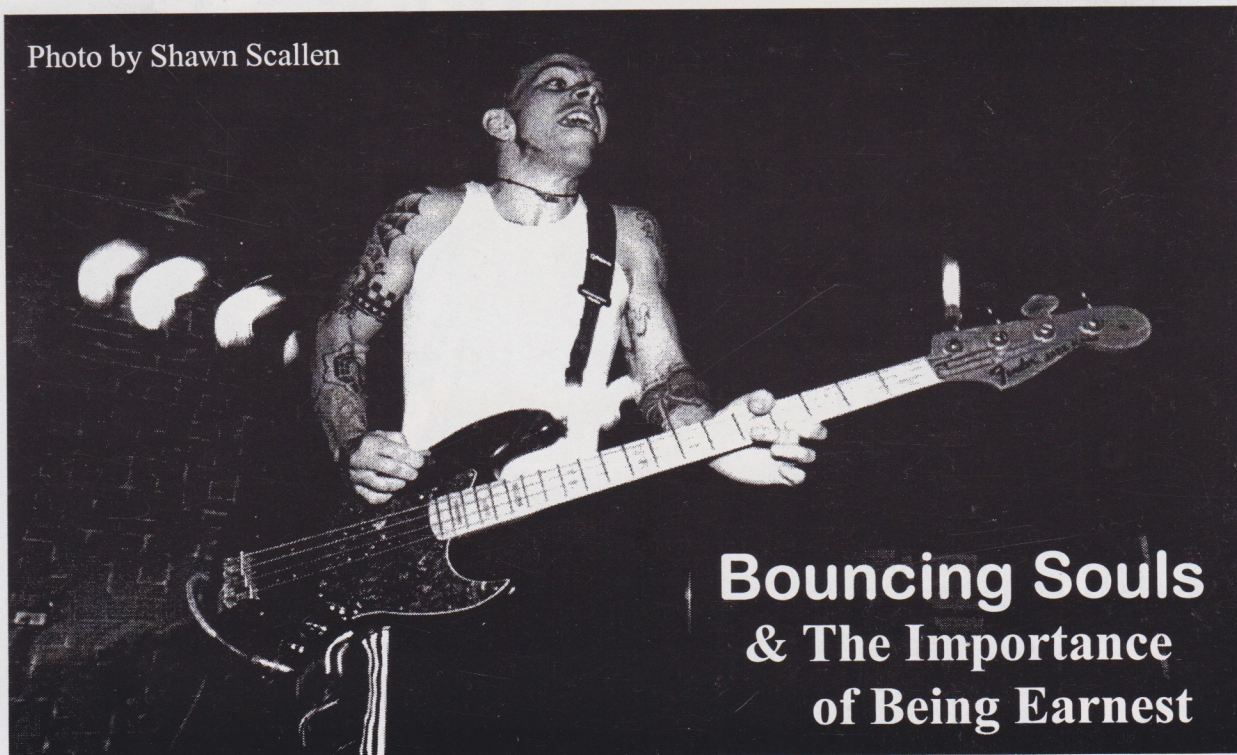
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But No Springsteen!

Photo by Shawn Scallen



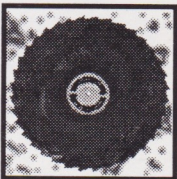
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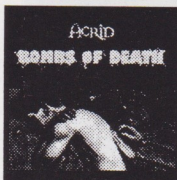
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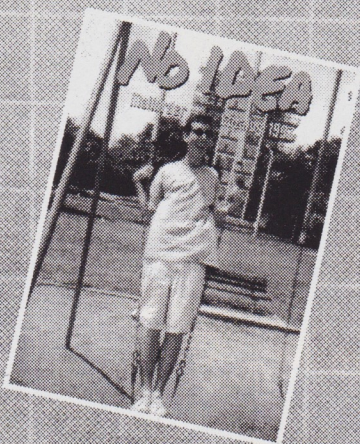
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From The Editor's Desk

It happens to be Thanksgiving weekend as I'm writing this, which makes this an apt time to reflect a bit on what I'm thankful for this year. 1997 may not go down as a record year in pop music (unless, of course, your last name is Hanson) but things have been pretty darn swell around here.

I don't say this enough, but the staff that helps write this fanzine is an enormous source of pride for me. I think you'll find some first-rate writing and thinking about music in these pages, by a surprisingly diverse group of people who don't get paid, but work their butts off nonetheless. I'd start mentioning names but then I'd have to mention all of them, so just let me say that I'm especially happy we have a few more women on the staff now, as well as a couple of bona fide teenagers. One thing I've learned is that punk rock is a lot like Christmas; it's a lot more fun if you have kids around. To everybody who helps make this happen, thank you.

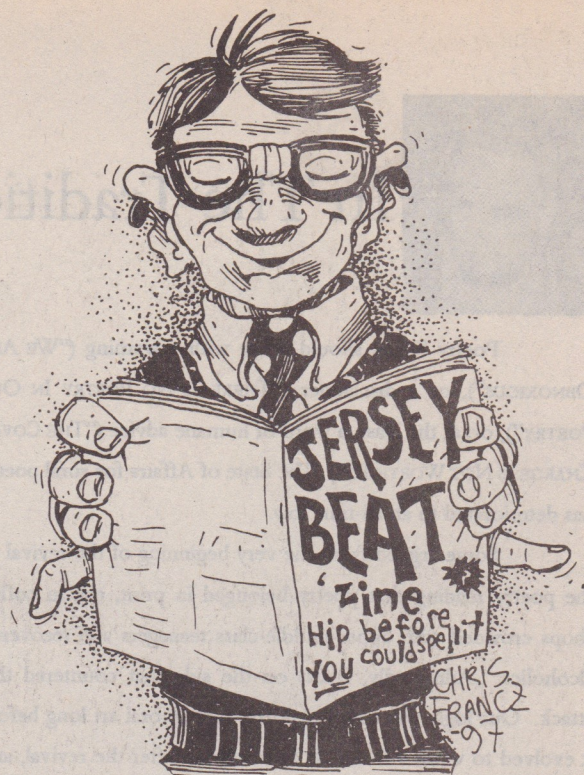
Then there was Jersey Beat's 15th anniversary, which we commemorated by hosting a show at The Saint in Asbury Park back in March, when we published issue #59. Five bands played, lots of people showed up, everyone had a great time, and it was - and this is no exaggeration - one of the best nights of my life. Since then, there have been two more Jersey Beat nights - another at The Saint, and one at the Budapest Lounge in New Brunswick - and we have another one coming up on December 23rd at The Saint, with Kid With Man Head and Evelyn Forever. You can keep your gold watch or glass trophy; these Jersey Beat Nights have been the best reward I can imagine - a chance to spend some time with the friends I've made by doing this zine, and giving some terrific bands a chance to perform in an atmosphere of mutual respect and camaraderie.

Things are looking up on that front too. In Hoboken, a group of bands has started a grassroots organization called Stop & Smell The Locals, dedicated to the idea of bands working together for a change and putting on their own shows, instead of settling for whatever hideous conditions are laid down by the local clubs. Down at the Jersey shore, the good people at The Saint run the Asbury Park Music Awards every year - a chance for local, unsigned bands to get a much-deserved slap on the back and spend an evening saluting one another. And in New Brunswick, there's even talk of organizing some sort of four or five-day music conference next year, similar to Wilmington, NC's W.E. Festival. Even the mercenary idiots at MTV are starting to realize that shoving major label crap down peoples' throats isn't going to work together. Maybe a little Matt Pinfield is starting to rub off on all those empty suits running the joint.

This issue doesn't have a theme per se, but as I was editing the interviews with such disparate individuals as the Bouncing Souls, Pat DiNizio, Jenifer Convertible, and Art Alexakis, certain similarities started to emerge. For one thing, they are all people I respect; that's why they're in the zine in the first place. And while some of them are making more money than others will ever see, they share a few common traits - hard work, for one, and a love for what they're doing. And one more - they all put on a great show. In today's music world, where stage presence seems to be a lost art, that means more than anything.

Finally, thanks to all of you reading this. I hope you enjoy reading this half as much as I've enjoyed putting it all together. Happy holidays, and we'll see you next year.

- Jim Testa, November, 1997



Issue #61

Winter 1997

Editor & Publisher
Jim Testa

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In The Tradition of Random Thoughts

by d. michael mcnamara

Poetry Slams should come with a warning ("WE ARE OBNOXIOUS"), or a disclaimer ("THERE IS NO POETRY IN OUR POETRY"), or, at the least, a word of humane advice ("THE COVER CHARGE IS NOT WORTH IT.") The State of Affairs for aural poetry has deteriorated to an all-time low.

Some argued from the very beginning of the revival of the poetry reading that poetry belonged in print, not in coffee shops crowded with upper-middle-class teenagers and recovered alcoholics. Admittedly, I was on the side that countered this attack. Our logic was simple: poetry was an oral art long before it evolved to written form. It is now years after the revival, and the facts deserve review.

There is no doubt that poetry readings pre-existed the Beat Generation: when poets gathered together to critique and study work, it was more practical and entertaining to have the author (or other speaker) read the work, especially before the invention of the copy machine. In school, too, it is easier to involve students by having pieces read aloud, as does this aid in teaching the concepts of rhythm and rhyme. But the solid establishment of the poetry reading in America can safely be said to be rooted in the narrative style modeled after improvisational be-bop jazz as introduced to us by Kerouac and inspired by Charlie Parker.

Sure, the other great Parker, Dorothy, was called upon to recite lyrics at the infamous cocktail parties of the thirties before then, but her rhymes appear initially as aphorisms or riddles. And that is exactly what her recitals served as: rarely did these moments invite the study her poetry deserves; they served as a quick laugh, as entertainment: not a moment of introspection or meditation.

And so the Beats sat around and read to each other, sipping their port. But these readings were, predominantly, among friends. As did they usually include comment and critique. Very few reading venues welcome this format these days, the Pen & Pencil Club in Philadelphia being one of them (or at least they used to).

So fast-forward to 1985, when Dave & Ana Christy – collectively known as the infamous and venerable Alpha Beat Press – started publishing the Beats again, which theoretically instigated the Beat revival. Which, eventually, led to Ginsberg doing Gap and Burroughs besting him with Nike. By now the spoken word genre was healthily re-established as "hip," allowing the Slam Circuit to shortly follow suit.

Refraining from typical "good old days" regression, a good thing started to go bad. The peak of my involvement was in 1993, which is also, arguably, when the popularity of the scene peaked as well. I got paid for featured readings, I frequented Open Mic's, I competed at slams. I even did a tour that started in New Jersey and deposited me in Milwaukee. I did Lollapalooza. I mingled with the masters of the art and was submerged in the scene.

But when, competing in a slam in Columbus, Ohio, I witnessed *fellow competitors* booing each other, I realized it no longer had anything to do with art. It was, at this point, a matter of competition, of winning. I witnessed a similar phenomenon recently in Seattle: the featured (and supposedly established) poet at an OK Hotel slam actually heckled performers. The irony here is that her poetry was inferior to the people she was humiliating.

So when slams become fast-food cut-throat microcosms of Corporate America, where is the poetry in that? Slams are about cliques. Slams are about whom had a worse life. Slams are about cursing and shouting. Sadly, slams are about almost anything other than poetry.

The Godfather and last member of the Beats is dead, and along with Burroughs so did the art of the poetry reading die. It is a stark reminder that even good things come to pass. A poetry reading as an added dimension of expression I can endorse; ruthless competition that falls very far from – and even degrades – an art form, however, is a very strong argument that evolution is good.

BIG BERTHA'S BACKYARD BASICS TO BOOKING AND TOURING.

Ok, boys and gorillas, and all you sticky critters in between. I'm Bertha and here's my column. Hopefully it'll help you in your musical and not so musical endeavors, with me as your host to give you some "been there," "seen it," "done that" info on booking your creepy D.I.Y. band to help eliminate that unconscious need to wax your bean... you know.. that activity you should've had therapy on years ago.

When booking shows for your band, you are of course going to get the usual scattered gigs that come from friends of a friend and so on, which is great. But to start off for a large tour it's a good idea to compile (*meaning to gather like a squirrel in heat*) a list of all the clubs/areas that you'd like to play. Using a pre-made form, with all your info about the club and questions you'll ask on it, will help. It's like a fill in the blanks test. Do they have a PA? Yes. Do we get a \$\$\$ guarantee? No. etc.

Now its going to get confusing if you're gabbing with 60 different club people at once so write down all your conversations, when you had them, and preferably as they are being had. Type as you talk. This is a really sure-fire way of being on the ball. Make sure you are calling the clubs in some geographical order -- keeping them close together at around 10 to 100 miles apart is the ideal thing to do, especially when it comes to feeding that wanker of a gas guzzler you call a van. This assures that you will be able to afford your tour with less stress and aggravation on your pockets. When calling the clubs, find out who does the booking and when, and if you get the person when you call, be ready to go with it (but more on that later).

So yuz gots all your info... Hold on, here we go, sexy...

GETTING THE DEMO SENT

When and if (sometimes it can be weeks b4 you do) get the guy/girl on the phone and you're ready to do your pitch (as much as you don't think so, it's a "sales" pitch and you're a freakin' telemarketer geek, so geek away and telemarket your band.) I'd like to go into detail on making your pitches because there are several different ways that you can approach this... but this will hafta wait till next issue because I have to go bikini wax my rear end, so howabout browsin' in the next issue when I tell you how to talk to the mindless individuals (aka club booking agents) who seem to hold you by your boobs and balls... hmmm, sounds fun, really... Don't hesitate to write to Jersey Beat with questions or comments about booking and touring. We'd be happy as a frog piddle to print it....send it c/o BIG BERTHA....till next time, kiss kiss...

TIPS TO AVOID THAT HANGOVER (while on the road)

- 1) Don't drink.
- 2) Do drugs instead.
- 3) Go back to sleep.
- 4) Get up out of bed, grip toilet, throw up, pray the worst is over and hope for the best

QUICK TIPS #1

When you're out on the road and touring with your band, don't go without merchandise to sell! CD's, shirts, whatever, because this means that there will be more cashola for you to do things like eat, get gas, and get home, and get to gigs and... well... and get beer. The crap you sell becomes your life's blood when in survival bandurbia.

(NEXT ISH: TOP 100 ITEMS TO TAKE ON DA ROAD)



Doin' It Yourself

So you went & made a demo tape...

...and now you're wondering what the heck to do with it. Fear not. Hey, nobody's born knowing this stuff, you have to ask! (Or be smart enough to read Jersey Beat.) Whether you're sending your demo tape to zines for reviews, to clubs for gigs, or to record labels to see if they're interested, we have 3 simple rules that will help you get some positive results:

1. Keep it short

3-5 songs is plenty. If you've got more, just enclose a note and say "more available on request." If they like you, they'll want to hear more.

2. Label it right!

Think of your demo as your business card, because that's really what it is. And make sure that any information that you'd put on a business card - your name, address, phone number, and email if you have it - is on your demo tape. You can put together a killer presskit, bio, and photo package, but I'll let you in on a secret. Most of that stuff gets shitcanned. But someone will probably hang on to your tape long enough to give it a listen. When they do, make sure there's enough info on there so they can get back to you!

3. Best song first

This is so simple you'd think people would figure it out, but they don't. You can program an album, and slot your best song strategically, but on a demo tape, your absolute best killer end-the-set song HAS to be first. Why? Because if they don't like that first cut, odds are they won't even play the rest.

denis sheehan

IT'S NOT MY FAULT (YES IT IS)

It's not my fault. Here is the phrase that plagues the 1990's. Nobody takes any responsibility for their own actions. Whether the blame is placed on parents, music, movies, or the school system, responsibility is passed on to the next guy. Take a look in your local telephone book. Can you believe how many lawyers exist! They exist to help the public get reimbursed for the fact that they don't know how to take care of themselves. Common sense should help a person determine what is the wrong, or better yet, stupid thing to do. No, not today. I'm stupid - give me money! Then when these geniuses get the money, they blow it all on the lottery. When the money is all gone and bills need to be paid, that's right, they sue again. This time claiming that all this money was

handed to them without any knowledge of how to handle it. Never fear when there is a lawyer near. Along with all the lawyers, you can find just as many psychiatrists. These people are here to help you "deal" with everything from your life's failures to why you feel manipulated by the toilet paper every time you go to the bathroom. The best part about these mind doctors is they help you blame everything wrong with your life on others by bringing suppressed memories to realization. Hey, you can blame your stupidity on somebody for a reason you didn't even know existed. Even better, after your finished screwing people over for your failures, feel free to write a book and hit the TV talk show circuit. Money and fame. You'll be such a success.



Cartoon by Joel Menter

Since I touched on the book idea, try this. Go to your nearest book store and check out the self-improvement section. There are more books to help people deal with such insignificant and petty problems than there are all other books put together. Do you know which book category is experiencing the largest increase in sales for the past couple of years? These very same self-improvement books. Worse than that, the sales of self-improvement audio tapes are skyrocketing. I guess people with "special" problems feel they just don't have the time to read. I know there are children being raised by lousy parents, but these books are not geared towards children, they are geared towards adults. Save yourself some time and some money. Get over it and move on with your life.

A few days ago, I had my Grandmother over for dinner. Knowing that I listen to "weird" music, she asked me "Why do you listen to that kind of music?" Being the quick thinking fellow I am, I replied "Uh, I don't know." After she left I started thinking. I'm the only one out of a huge family that listens to punk rock. In high school, a friend and I were the only two who listened to punk. It wasn't easy either. I grew up about twenty minutes outside of Boston. To get any type of punk records, we had to find different ways of getting to Boston, which is a story within itself (and possibly a future article). Punk fanzines with mail order info never even made it my way. Why was I drawn away from the "mainstream" and thrown into the world of punk music? Well hey, why should I miss out on all the action? After all, it can't possibly be my fault! I feel obligated to blame my musical taste on some thing. Hmmm, let's see. I know! I'll blame my love for punk music on the popular music of the 1980's. During the span of the 1980's, I was age 12 to 22. These years, I feel, are the music years. One can almost predict what their music listening future will be by how their teen years and early twenties unfold. Lets pretend that punk and independent music didn't exist

during the 80s. Lets take a look at and dissect, musically and not so musically, the alternate choices.

The mainstream, popular music in the 80s can be broken into a few sections:

- 1) The end of disco
- 2) Heavy Metal
- 3) New wave
- 4) Glam, or hairspray metal

First, the end of Disco. By the time 1980 rolled around, Disco was tired and basically done. Nobody follows something when the end is so close. I still remember to this day New Year's Eve 1980. The Village People were on The Dick Clark Special. I remember the grownups in the room making fun of those guys. I really didn't understand why they hated the Village People so much, when only a few years before they were so popular. Any of you kiddies remember the song "Macho Man"? I hope not. Go to your parents' album collection (you know, the large black, plastic circles.) I'm sure you'll find a copy of some Village People record.

There were some other disco singers around, but I can't remember them. Maybe this is a good time to bring in a psychiatrist to help me with my suppressed memories. Never mind, I might remember the cloths. This is the same era when pants were known as slacks.

Wait a minute. I have found an answer to my question. I was left out of the Disco years. I have done it. I placed blame for my musical taste. But who can I sue?

Next comes Heavy Metal. Wasp, Judas Priest, Krokus and Motley Crue. All these bands were popular during my freshmen and sophomore years in high school. The lead singer from Wasp wore a circular saw blade on his penis. Even at age 14 I couldn't take a person like that seriously, nor did I want to listen to any music he produced. Motley Crue put more effort into their hair and make up then their music. I know these clowns are still around, in fact they're playing with Quite Riot at a pool party down the street. Krokus plain out sucked and Judas Priest wore leather pants that were just a tad to tight for me.

Besides the reasons mentioned above I can think of another reason for not liking Heavy Metal. Where are they all today? Bands

from the 60's and 70's are still rolling around. How come none of the popular heavy metal bands stuck around? I'll tell you, because they stunk! The Rolling Stones, Kiss, Aerosmith (yuck!) and The Who are all still kicking. This proves that even though a band produces boring music, if they have some talent, they can stick around. Speaking of The Who, does anybody know anyone that actually likes The Who? The Who and Beck have a lot in common. They stick around and make money, but I don't know a single soul that likes either one of them.

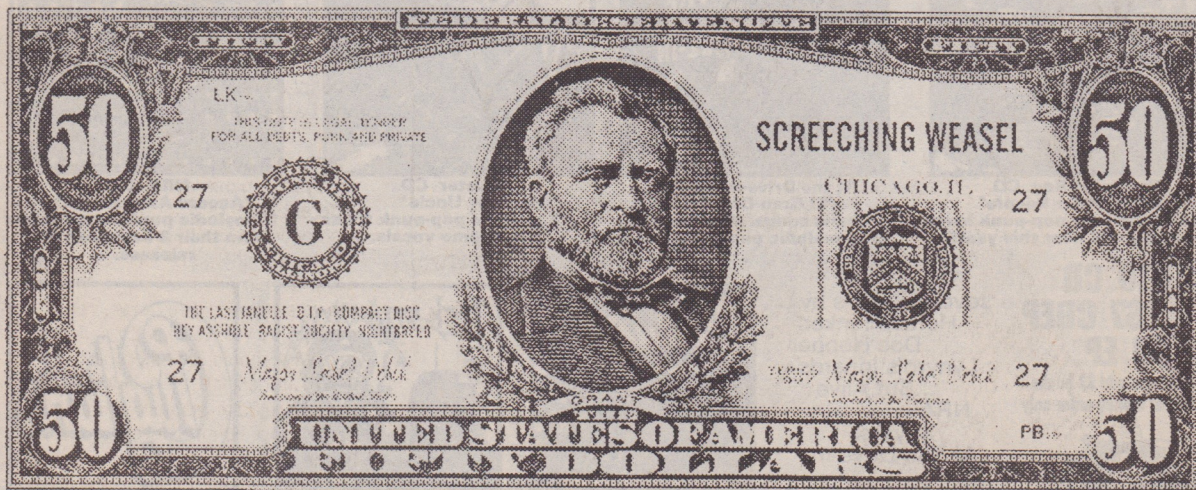
O.K. Van Halen is still around. Although, they are going on their 50th lead singer. Van Halen was huge in the early, David Lee Roth days. Stop and think about them for a minute. All of their hits were cover songs. "You Really Got Me", "Pretty Women", "Where Have All The Good Times Gone", and "Dancing In The Streets" were all rip-offs. So much for originality. I remember hearing Van Halen's *Women And Children First* album over a friends house and thinking it was pretty cool. I bought it. When I opened the album, I found enclosed a poster of David Lee Roth chained to a fence shirtless and wearing leather pants so tight his feet were dark blue. That was it for me. I felt like I had just bought the bonus issue of *Teen Beat* magazine.

Most of the British Heavy Metal bands were into the devil worshipping thing (ha, I bet you kiddies thought Marilyn Manson was the first to do that). Grim Reaper and Iron Maiden are good examples. Fire, explosions, blood and violence are fine if you're in a war, but leave it out of my music thanks. Speaking of violence, have you noticed how the younger kids today can fight? I'm talking about the kids age 4 to 10. I think it's because they learn how to fight at such an early age by watching The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers and The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles on TV. These children can land a flying spin kick to your scrotum while strategically landing a fore arm chop to the throat before you even know they're in the room. People my age, 29, can't fight because we grew up watching The Six Million Dollar Man and Kung Fu. Remember these shows? All the fight scenes were in slow motion and that's how we fought. One can't fight in slow motion and win.

O.K., I'll admit it. When I was a freshman in high school I - this

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hurts so much - went to an Ozzy Osborne concert at The Boston Garden. It gets better. Motley Crue was the opening band. Look, the tickets were free and a friend and I just wanted to go to see what it was like. We were in the seventh row and were amazed at how the entire crowd did the same three things; 1) every one cried over some jerk guitarist named Randy Rhodes who died in an airplane crash; 2) every one made the same hand signals to each other. It looked like Spiderman shooting a web out of his hand. Not only that, but when people did this, they always felt the need to hang their tongue out; 3) for every slow song, the crowd lit their lighters and swayed together to the music. I have one question to ask: WHY? Needless to say, my friend and I left early. As we exited The Garden, a security guard said if we left we are not allowed back in. We graciously thanked him.

Another thing that disturbed me about Heavy Metal bands: Why was it whenever a band played, the lead singer, guitarist, and bassist would always line up together and bob back and forth to the music. All the bands did this strange line dance. I always felt sorry for the drummer. I often wondered if he felt left out and isolated.

I have another reason to blame for my love of punk rock. The Heavy metal bands of the 80's lacked talent in a big way and partook in strange rituals.

New wave. Now here was a great idea. Get a band together, get funky haircuts, press one button on a synthesizer, record one hit and then disappear. That was the life of a new wave band. It was almost impossible to really get into New Wave because every New Wave band that existed only did for two weeks. When was the last time you heard from Flock of Seagulls? How about The Fixx? The list goes on.

Not only did New Wave bands have a shorter life span than an infant pulling on the genitals of an underfed pit bull, but there weren't any good songs. Sure, there were a lot of songs that were O.K. but not many earned it's keep. Think I'm crazy? Go to a record store and find three or four 80's New Wave compilations. Each one of those compilations will be 95% the same. Maybe one or two

songs will be different on each, but still, that's not much to choose from. Check out a 1970's compilation. 70's comps are usually five CD sets.

Not only did these bands quickly disappear, but it wasn't too hard to be in a New Wave band. Take New Order for instance. These goons were known for walking off stage in the middle of a concert. That's fine, but the instruments kept on playing after they left. That was when computers started to make an impact on every day life. Why was it in the 80's if you were into computers, you were the geek from hell? However, in the 90's, the more you know about computers, the cooler and richer you are. In the 80's, computers equaled pocket protectors. In the 90's, computers equal inline skates.

I know this excuse is pretty lame, but it drove me insane during the New Wave craze. There was a German woman named Nena (whom I considered very cute until I saw the giant bush under her arms) who sang a song called "99 Red Balloons." Well, that's what I called it. If you were cool and hip to the scene, one referred to this song as "99 Luft Balloons." You could always tell which people were really into New Wave just by how they referred to the name of this song. I loved to annoy the New Wavers by calling this song "99 Red Balloons" and having them correct me. 99 Luft Balloons, please, the last time I checked we were in America waving the ol' Luft, White, and Blue.

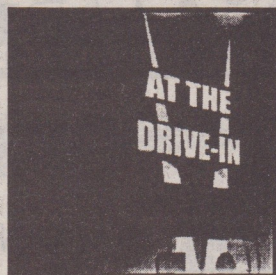
New Wave also brought with it a new clothing style. The androgynous look. Half the time I couldn't tell if the person I found sexy was a boy or a girl! Being a straight male, I didn't like this. The men dressed very girly and prissy often making their gender a tough call. At least the Heavy Metal men looked as if they had been severely beaten with the ugly stick. To this day I still have nightmares of Boy George.

I have plenty of places to lay blame on New Wave for my love of punk. Ultra short life for all bands, not many good songs, and too damn sexually confusing. Glam, hair spray metal. God help me with this one. Poison, Warrant. They kept recycling old sappy

joe's favorite records



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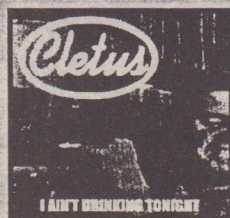
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songs. This song has also been re-released again in the 90's. Will it ever end?

Reasons to hate Hair Metal; Mutation of two lousy music's, too sexual for my taste, caused a drought in my sex life, predictable ballads, and in one word-headbands.

There are a few major bands that were extremely popular and successful in the 80's that I haven't touched yet.

* Michael Jackson - If I have to explain, you won't understand.

* Madonna - Hey! In the 80's she was fat. Sex and fat don't mix.

* Prince - First off, this guy's head is so huge I'm surprised he doesn't need training wheels to keep him from tipping over. Listen to any of his popular 80's songs and try to count how many times you hear a high pitched "Hee, heeeyaa." He also liked to lick his lips to appear sexy. Lck.

* U2 - No matter who you are everybody likes one or two songs from these dudes (yes, you too punker). While becoming millionaires here in the States, they always took cheap shots at America. No support here.

* Billy Idol - Insert your own hysterical laughter here.

* AC/DC - If you heard one song, you've heard them all.

* REM - I could write a bunch about these clowns, but I will probably fall asleep from remembering how boring they are.

There is another reason for turning away from the popular music of the 80's. Videos. During the 80's we saw a huge boom in the music video industry. There was MTV, and for the people without cable, there was Friday Night Videos. On a daily basis musicians were paraded in front of us on TV. This most likely turned me away the most. I actually got to see how these popular bands acted like such jerks. I know there were some punk bands that made videos, but they never got air play, so nobody ever saw them. Don't get me wrong, I don't think there is anything wrong with a band making a music video. It is how the video is made that matters to me. Videos often steer the attention away from the music and focuses it on the overacting and artificial flashiness of the band. I'll never forget when

a female friend said she thought Poison's lead singer's image was cool. Cool? What is so cool about having a hair dresser, make up artist, and a wardrobe consultant fix you up for five hours before you hit the stage or get in front of a camera? If a music video is made, it should glorify the bands musical talents. Put the band on a stage, point a few cameras at them, and let them play. It still amazes me when I hear how it takes days and some times weeks to make a video. With the way most popular music was marketed in the 80's, and even more in the 90's, people were and still are most likely to like a video before the band or it's music. I believed then, and now, that these giant record labels think that my (our) musical sense and taste is so shallow that I (we) will fall victim to their marketing ploy. **WRONG!**

I know I've painted some pretty broad strokes, but I'm sure you get the picture. As you just read, I had no choice but to follow the punk rock music scene. It wasn't my fault. I now feel as if I've been accepted by the 1990's. I have cast aside responsibility for my taste in music. Even better, I did it while goofing on and insulting popular 1980's bands and their faithful followers. Just think, this was nothing. Can you imagine the bashing I gave my cousin after I thumbed through his cd collection. While searching for a cd to listen to, there it was. Out of nowhere. Like a ferocious, venomous cow lurking in the shadows waiting only to scare one with a frightful moo. Second to last row from the bottom. Eighth disc in from the right. Vanilla Ice. *To The Extreme.*

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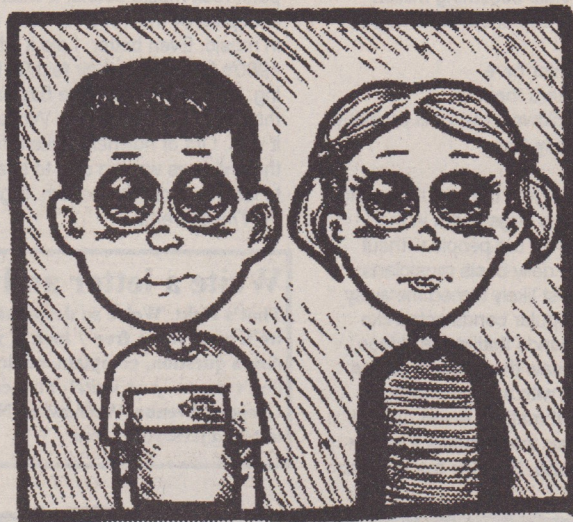
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So today I put on my light blue and navy striped socks, baggy shorts, and everready tee shirt and walked to school. I leaped over the thorn bushes, only to get cut twice. It was here, on this gravel path, in back of my house, that thoughts emerged. It was one of those moments. You know the kind, where for a whole three minutes, you're completely out of touch with anything physical. The only things to be seen were images similar to slides in a projector. I walked further. Ideology continued to stream the air. I felt a presence of both my

ging. While, for someone else, happiness might be found through affection, song lyrics, and traveling. For me, it's the little things that derive the most pleasure. Like beating the I.C. Football team at Intramural Floor Hockey Junior Year, finding a five dollar bill out front of the Path station on 33rd street, or being given a ten cent bowl from the salvation army. Damn, the list can go on forever.... (More than the number of boob jobs Tori Spelling has had).

So what am I getting at with all of this? I'm not exactly sure. And that's just it. If you're the type of person that

Be My Head



By David Brown

muddlemag@clarityconnect.com

grandfathers. It felt comforting yet sad at the same time. Next thing I knew, I had stopped walking and a ladybug was crawling up my leg. My shoes were sinking in the mud. My thoughts were soon to follow. I shook my head and snapped out of this state of deja vu. Cutting through the poison ivy I realized all the people involved in the makeup of my life. Their importance, significance, and meaning. I wonder if both my grandpas' know I miss them greatly. I do.

Someone once told me I was a striped person. I guess all my socks have stripes in them. Now my left sock has a hole from the rocks I slipped over in getting atop the paved driveway in front of the school's back entrance. I wonder if anyone's noticed the leaves are changing. I wonder if anyone but this blue light will understand what's going on inside my head. A flux. Now I'm walking up a short steep hill. This requires even more energy. I pull the little fortune strip buried at the bottom of my front pocket. It reads, "Stop searching forever, happiness is just next to you." I propose somewhat of a sigh. Meanwhile a floating dandelion smacks the surface of my cheeks. It seems the only time I ever truly think about happiness is when I'm not wrapped up among it. I guess everyone has his or her own definition. Happiness for one might be sipping wine, reading books, and jog-

has super intense (and over-analytical) thoughts at the most random of times...and you're stuck trying to make sense of it all... happiness, life, death, meaning, self-worth, etc...but everywhere you look, all roads just lead to empty solutions... well, you're not alone. Everyone's got so much shit going on in his or her own life. If you're confused about stuff, it's ok. Heck, I just went downstairs, poured some wine into a coffee mug, walked up the stairs, tripped, and spilled the red-stuff all over my pants. So what. I can only laugh. Everyone's got drama in there life. Some wear it like a new shirt while others are really good at hiding it. But it's there, nonetheless. Sometimes, you just feel like getting all festive, putting on that Halloween costume, and living it up. Other times, you might just rather lie on your bed with a candle lit, and Radiohead blasting away at your emotions. It's like a seesaw. Usually, just when you've played out your depressed side long enough to start your own Promise Ring, someone comes along and blows your lame ass away. (Reference here: Drinking Andy - thanks). Need not worry, for your turn to be the uplifter of the party isn't too far down the road. And you'll wake up, head out for school, and say, "everything looks right today."

(Write Me: muddlemag@clarityconnect.com or c/o Muddle Fanzine PO Box 621 - Ithaca, NY 14851)



Ben Weasel's

TV EYE

Ben Weasel's TV Eye - Installment 2

I never thought I'd be applauding the National Broadcasting Company for anything, let alone for doing the right thing. And for doing the right thing not for financial gain, but *because* it's the right thing. I refer, of course, to the latest in this fall's line of falling-in-line; namely, the extension of an already unnecessary television ratings system to include specific information about exactly what might be offensive in a given program. Forget that the ratings are completely arbitrary. Forget that "TV-PG" and "TV-Y" are redundant terms which apparently exist only to clue in the more confused and drunk amongst us that we are, at that moment, actually watching TV. Forget that the ratings system was encouraged and the actual letter ratings finalized by Jack Valenti, chief killjoy of Hollywood's MPAA and the guy who, after almost fifteen years of pressure from critics and filmmakers, finally created a rating for non-pornographic films for adults only to turn around and take full credit for the idea, and then to turn around again and use the NC-17 rating as the MPAA's in-house bogeyman (one that seems to be brought out only to suffocate those filmmakers whose work might fall into the general category of art, leaving those responsible for such scintillating cinema as *Batman And Robin* relatively unscathed). Forget that in poll after poll, even the average American dolt finds the ratings to be pointless; at best, they're just another piece of useless information to be ignored. Forget that the entire TV ratings debacle is a political move by the *real* New Right, the Clinton Right, the ones who are always so goddamned concerned about what other people's kids are watching, and forget that nobody but a handful of mentally retarded hillbillies and high-mythically-uptight crabs take the things seriously.

Forget *all* that, because the point here is that the fuckers went too far, and NBC stood up and told 'em to go to hell. Enough is enough, said NBC. We already paste a little black box up in the corner of our screen reading something awkward and confusing like "TV-MA" every time a new program begins. We're not going to go the extra mile into the ridiculous realm of slapping a "D" or a "V" or an "S" up there as well. It's pointless, said NBC. We've studied the polls. Nobody cares.

Oh, the horror! You'd think that NBC had just advocated the sale of all blue-eyed males under the age of five into a kiddie-porn ring. Valenti's henchmen and the Clinton Cabal are already putting pressure on the Peacock network. They don't like being disobeyed. Yes, Virginia, the ratings system is all voluntary. Really.

Fuck Jack Valenti, fuck Bill Clinton and his hip-liberal, underhanded, V-Chip mentality and fuck anybody who takes up space on my television screen, in my *TV Guide* and in my newspaper with their guilty-white-liberal attempts to protect America's children.

Walk outside. Listen to five-year old kids calling each other "bitch." Listen to ten-year old kids calling each other "motherfucker." Strong language, violence, and strong sexual content are not new concepts to anybody except the children of clergymen and residents of Nebraska. America is the only industrialized nation that's so obscenely child-based. Go to a zoo in France. They don't put three sets of gates up to stop you from sticking your hand in the lion's

cage. If you're stupid enough to stick your hand in the cage, well, the French chalk it up to a little thing called natural selection. In Denmark, it's common to leave your baby in its carriage outside a restaurant on the sidewalk while you sit at a table inside, separated from your child by a pane of glass. The Danish do not appreciate listening to squalling infants while in the middle of a meal. Those who have children accept the fact that just because they chose to procreate, that doesn't give them the automatic right to stomp all over the rules of common decency. But pull that carriage-outside-the-restaurant move in New York City - the biggest, hippest, most up-to-date city in this country - and the horrified people of Manhattan flip out. "Throw those terrible parents in jail!" That stuff might be fine for Denmark, they say, but this is New York!

What do they imagine will happen to the tots of Gotham should urban parents take up the practice of showing a little compassion for those of us who paid to eat a decent meal and not to listen to their lovable little screaming balls of spit-up? How utterly paranoid and childish. These people are *not* simply acknowledging reality. They're

Hasn't it occurred to anyone that the practice of leaving small children outside a restaurant while one dines is the sensible, civilized, sane thing to do?

buying into the same old crime rap that guys like Rudy Giuliani thrive on. "You're gonna get raped." Maybe, but assuming you possess the slightest bit of common sense, the chances of you getting raped by a stranger while walking around the city are more than likely far less than the chances of you getting cancer in the next twenty years. "You're gonna get shot." Doubtful, unless you work in a shop that's getting robbed and you try to be a hero, or if you're unlucky enough to get caught in gangbanger crossfire. "You're gonna get mugged." Well, actually, in New York you probably *are* gonna get mugged. But in Giuliani's New York, at least you won't get mugged by a bum. Your mugger will smell halfway decent at the very least.

Digressions aside, hasn't it occurred to anyone that the practice of leaving small children outside a restaurant while one dines is the sensible, civilized, sane thing to do? And by the same token, why must we constantly be subjected to the networks' self-censorship in the name of protecting the youngsters' precious little eyes and ears? How many people in America with young children *don't* have cable TV in their homes? Those kids have heard "fuck," "shit" and "cunt" before they even know who Big Bird is. They've seen more bare tits and asses by the time they're ten than I did by the time I was twenty. Who the fuck are we trying to kid?

Parents feel guilty for not spending enough time with their children. They're too busy off pursuing the American Dream, those of them who are still foolish enough to believe such a thing exists. They make choices but they don't want to have to live with them.

They want kids because they're *supposed* to have kids, but they don't want to take responsibility if Junior turns out to be the Boston Strangler, so they lay the blame on the cheapest babysitter, and the one they most frequently use: the TV.

Well, Mr. and Mrs. America, I say (and evidently, so does NBC) fuck you and the horse you rode in on. I didn't knock up your wife, John Q. Public. Your brats are *your* problem and I'm sick and tired of you fucking up my fun just because you can't admit that you might be a lousy parent.

And I'll tell you something else. While this ratings system may not be dangerous in and of itself, it's a sign of a weak and frightened culture that doesn't even begin to understand the concepts of personal responsibility, inner strength and the ability to do one's own thinking for one's self. If you haven't had your fill of Bill Clinton and his asshole baby boomer pals with their "I got mine so fuck you" mentality by now, then I strongly suggest you visit a headshrinker. And bring your kid.

I finally saw *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* - the movie - on video. It was awful. I kept wishing that the vampires would get the title character, which I don't think was the creator's intention. I figured the movie would suck, but I was surprised at how much, especially given that the writer, Joss Whedon, went on to create a one-hour weekly series with the same name for the WB network, which is without a doubt the best action show on television, and possibly the best show about teenagers ever to grace the small screen.

The almost unbearably good-looking Sarah Michelle Gellar stars as Buffy Summers, who, having burned down the gymnasium in her last highschool in L.A. whilst eliminating the local bloodsuckers, has been given the boot from said school. She and her mother have moved to Sunnydale, California, (where mom has opened an art gallery) and Buffy enrolls in a new high school, happy to be rid of vampires and slaying for good. Almost immediately, she makes the acquaintance of Rupert Giles (Anthony Stewart Head), a forty-ish librarian who claims to be The Watcher to her Slayer. He informs her that Sunnydale is hovering over the mouth of hell, and there's slaying to be done. As The Watcher, Giles must guide The Slayer along her destined path; his "guidance" mostly consists of researching bad guys for her and training her to do combat with the undead. Buffy isn't happy about being dragged back into the slaying business, but she doesn't really have any say in the matter, as she is The Chosen One (all this stuff is wonderfully silly of course, but it's presented as undeniable fact, as it should be).

Cordelia Chase (Charisma Carpenter), the school's popularity queen, takes Buffy under her wing, fascinated to be chumming with someone who has actually shopped in L.A. But, unlike the character in the film, this Buffy is no airhead, and as soon as she is spotted talking to the brainy, plain, and delightfully droll Willow Rosenberg (Alyson Hannigan), Cordelia brands her a freak.

Willow's best friend is Xander Harris (Nicholas Brendon), an affable, clever kid on whom Willow has a major crush. Xander is unaware of the attraction and quickly develops a crush of his own on the equally unreceptive Buffy.

If this sounds like a set-up for a 90210 rip-off, I can't say I blame you for rolling your eyes. Instead of the Peach Pit, the *Buffy* crew hangs out at The Bronze, a combination coffee house/alternacub (and feel free to join me in my write-in campaign to get Screeching Weasel a guest shot on stage at the Bronze for a future episode...). The kids all look remarkably mature for their supposed ages. Parents are seldom seen, and when they are, they're buffoonish caricatures.

But the teen angst, broken hearts and hurt feelings comprise only a small part of Buffy. Most of the show is filled with honestly-written and played scenes that balance the agony of adolescence with vampires, zombies, mummies, reptilian demons, grave robbing and other such fun stuff. The concept sounds incredibly stupid, but somehow Whedon and his excellent cast make this show work.

Early on, Xander and Willow quickly learn the truth about Buffy after they overhear her and Giles discussing the vanquishing of vampires and demons. They take the news in stride and are soon

involved - peripherally - in the slaying. Tucked away in a delightfully dark and spooky library which looks to be about 80 years older than the rest of the school (and which is, of course, always devoid of students), the four work on the details of slaying the bad guys. Buffy deals with the rough stuff, dispensing of demons with a sweaty, sexual athleticism; Gellar is 16 like I'm a Mexican dwarf. Buffy is a typical, if perhaps a bit unrealistically good-natured, teenager. In Sunnydale, a girl like Buffy simply isn't expected to hang out with a couple of nobodies like Xander and Willow, but Buffy's got too weird of a life as it is to be worrying about social conventions; she genuinely likes her two cohorts.

Giles hands out helpful hints in his clipped, British accent, usually staring off into space as he speaks, as if already lost in another thought. Mumbling, adjusting his glasses and unintentionally speaking over everyone's heads, he's a thoroughly entertaining



English stereotype. Forever poring over a dusty tome in the name of demon research, he is at once Buffy's mentor and her comic foil. As the only adult figure of any relevance on the show, Giles is ultimately depicted as one of the gang. He leads the way, but doesn't pretend to have all the answers.

Willow - being a kid of the '90s - hacks into computer files at the local newspaper and the morgue and does research on the bad guys on the Internet, a concept even more alien to the traditional Giles than an actual computer (Giles' reasoning for his dislike of computers is unique: "They don't smell."). A romantic with the mind of a rocket scientist, Willow's involvement in the world with the undead provides her with the opportunity to live vicariously through the more outwardly glamorous Buffy.

Xander stands around making smart-aleck comments, usually having little to do with the mechanics of researching and snuffing out

the evil-doers. His help in a crisis always seems superfluous, as if written solely so that Brendon won't be standing around looking at his shoes. Which is not to say his character isn't crucial to the show - it certainly is - but rather to point out that Xander usually ends up filling the traditionally female role.

The characters are all witty purveyors of dry sarcasm, but unlike *Clueless*, the dialogue doesn't sound as if it were thought up by a couple of overpaid, bespectacled nerds in their thirties. And the tone of the show is certainly not entirely lighthearted. It gets creepy, and sometimes delightfully gory - the special effects are first-rate. It's sarcastic without being snotty or mean-spirited, and it's sincere without being maudlin. The characters are immensely likable and even the alternative soundtrack is unoffensive (and the theme song by Nerf Herder is surprisingly catchy).

So I like this show. I like the moments when Willow, instead of sighing to herself, says "sigh." I like Buffy's constant moping about having to be a slayer, and her subsequent command of the ins and outs of undead ass-kicking. I like that Xander is portrayed neither as a member of the in-crowd or a dork, but as a regular guy who you'd like to have as a friend. I like when Giles imparts to Buffy & Co. his latest tidbit of information: "My resources on this are extremely limited... I gather that this particular mummy was from the Sevenkaia region of Eastern Peru. It's very remote..." I like the Cordelia character (one of two people outside the group who's aware of their hobby) and her sincere commitment to shallowness, and Ms. Calendar (Robia LaMorte) (the other person who's clued in to the group's anti-vampire agenda,) a spunky, sexy teacher who claims to be a pagan and who occasionally surfaces as Giles' would-be love interest.

But what I liked most about the show in its first season was the fact that Joss Whedon seemed committed to writing, executive producing and occasionally directing a quality show that wouldn't fall into the same traps as other teen dramas. "There will never be a 'very special episode' of *Buffy*," he claimed, when asked about the title character's virginity.

As the second season approached, rumors flew that the show's violence and gore would be toned down and the romantic angles played up in order to attract more female viewers. This caused me no small amount of concern, as I figured that first of all, it was a stupid, condescending idea, and secondly, the truth of the matter is that the "softer" side of *Buffy* is the crappiest side of *Buffy*.

Last season, Buffy developed a crush on a 220 year-old vampire named Angel (David Boreanaz) (I'm not sure if that's pronounced "boring ass"...). A brooding hunk of vacant-eyed meat, Boreanaz could just as easily be playing somebody's boyfriend on *Melrose Place*. He has that soap-opera, homosexual look that Oreo-addicted, Oprah-watching housewives find so sexy. Both the actor and his character take away from the charm of the show, and the whole stupid subplot (oh, the cruel irony of a Slayer in love with a vampire) reads like something out of a soon-to-be-published Anne Rice novel. To learn that I might be subjected to even more of this mook was not encouraging news.

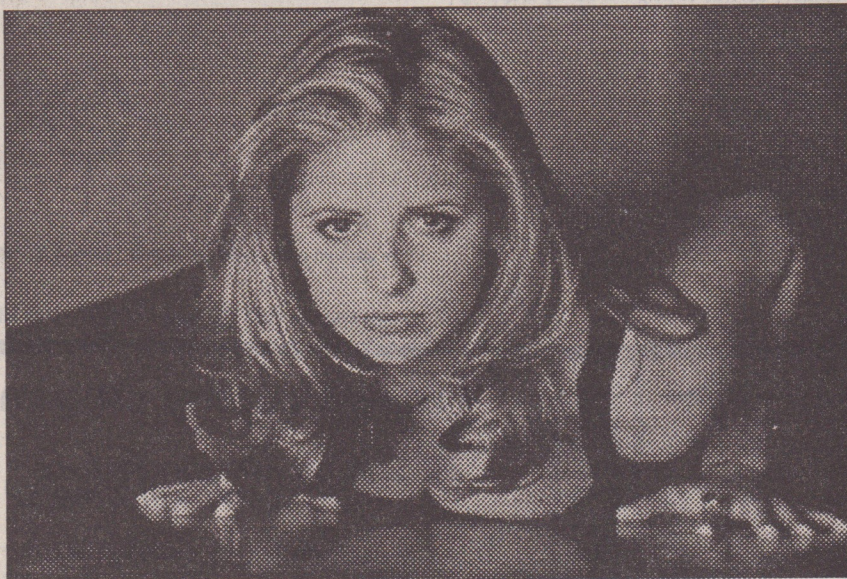
And as the new season began, we were treated to a sulking, unresponsive Buffy; she'd become a Generation X'er. The romantic subplot was thrust into the foreground and I found myself gagging as if someone had just spilled a gallon of bargain-bin perfume on the carpet. To say the show was depressing, predictable, phony and cheap would be kind. I wanted to hunt down that punk Whedon and kick his ass a few times. Screeching Weasel live at the Bronze? Not a chance! Still, in the name of objective television journalism, I decided to give the show another chance.

And it was brilliant! Better than ever! The characters were back to normal. It was funny, and cute, and not at all like the dishonest garbage peddled by the shucksters at Fox.

The worst sign of the new season - and one that will haunt us for the rest of the season - was the introduction of the characters of Spike and Drusilla, described by Whedon as "the Sid and Nancy of the vampire set." (I find it strange how the guy can be so lucid and full of great ideas one moment and so boring and full of cliches the next). I assume that Whedon hasn't the slightest idea who Sid and Nancy were, as the Spike character is more like Billy Idol. Actually, he's more like a California kid trying to be Billy Idol, complete with the worst English accent ever heard on television. Strike that. The worst

accent honors go to Drusilla, a non-character who rarely speaks, who is almost never seen, who exists in a trance-like stupor and whose accent sounds roughly like Bart Simpson aping a member of Spinal Tap. Spike and Drusilla are supposed to be hip, cutting-edge vampires. Naturally, they're incredibly tiresome. I liked the slimy, old, fucked-up vampires a lot better.

The other problem is the show's increasingly romantic tone - the rumors have proven to be true, more or less. Whedon has turned 180 degrees on his



promise that Buffy's sex life would not be an issue on the show. In fact, the season so far seems to be leading up to a big, dumb, will-she-or-won't-she moment.

To that end, this season has been bizarre. The pattern has been, roughly, a terrible show, followed by two superb shows, followed by an absolute stinker. The Halloween episode - in which Buffy and friends take on the characteristics of their costumes (meaning that Xander becomes a machine-gun toting soldier and Buffy becomes a helpless eighteenth-century dingbat) - was a disaster, but for the dolling up of Willow in a tight sweater and miniskirt, proving that the girl is actually totally hot. Conceptually, it was a *Star Trek* trick, one that seems to be utilized whenever writers run out of ideas. Don't know where the character should go from here? Okay, here's an episode where the characters think they're somebody else. Hacks like William Shatner love this kind of junk because they believe it allows them to flash their acting chops. More often than not - as was the case with *Buffy* - it only highlights their limitations.

When the show is good, as is usually the case, it's outstanding. Certainly the show could benefit from having Screeching Weasel playing the Bronze, but that's a relatively minor point. The characters are actually likable, which is such a rarity on TV these days; in the age of the-more-obnoxious-the-better characters in film and on TV, it's refreshing to be treated to the sight of people acting like halfway

decent human beings, and apologizing when they act like jerks. The writers may not have the freshest plot ideas, but that's hardly the strong point of a show like *Buffy* anyway. Much more importantly, they seldom sacrifice the integrity of a character for a plot point, as so many screenwriters for shows of this ilk do.

But when the show is bad, it's a mess. The romantic scenes are silly and phony, and seem tacked on simply because they're expected to be there. Whedon has promised that all of the main characters will be involved in romantic relationships this season. Thankfully, he's stated that every one of the relationships will go "horribly wrong," so he's seemingly not completely lost yet.

So despite the signs of this show turning into a complete abortion, I'm still watching; which is, I guess, a testament to the concept and the depth of the characters. *Buffy* hooked me with its wit and charm, and those qualities are still there. I'm just worried that the writing staff is already running out of ideas and substituting cliched romantic nonsense for the genuine, honest qualities that made the series what it is. In the meantime, I recommend it (assuming you can catch it on a good night). And my attempts to get Screeching Weasel a guest shot onstage at the Bronze for an upcoming episode will continue. Feel free to help me out by dropping a line to:

Buffy The Vampire Slayer
c/o Warner Brothers Television Network
4000 Warner Blvd.
Burbank CA 91522

Readers are invited to write with feedback, comments, criticism, or stupid questions about Screeching Weasel to: TV Eye, c/o Jersey Beat, 418 Gregory Avenue, Weehawken NJ 07087, or email to letters@jerseybeat.com

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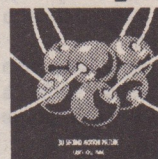


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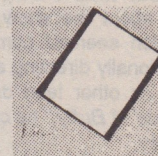
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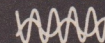
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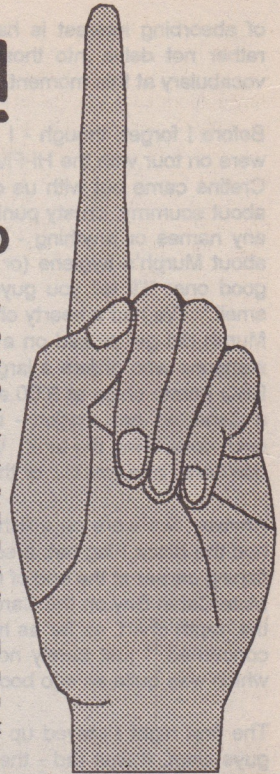
or, Joe Queer takes the bait & goes deep

Odds are you've heard the Queers' music. Maybe you've seen the Queers at a show. But you probably haven't had a chance to sit down with Joe Queer himself and listen to him tell a few stories. It is an experience. With that guttersnipe New Hampshire accent of his - part Boston Brahmin, part Bowery Boy - and a vocabulary to match, Joe "Queer" King is a 100 percent unique piece of work. But he's also a pretty busy guy and almost impossible to connect with, so imagine my surprise when I opened the mail one day to find a 17-page, handwritten manuscript from the man himself, all about his adventures at sea aboard the S.S. Carol Ann out of North Hampton, New Hampshire. Hang on to your hats, boys and girls, and grab a few Dramamine if you tend to get seasick, we're off into the wild blue yonder with Joe Queer. - Jim Testa

Since my illustrious band of mentally retarded punks is on hiatus at the moment - more on that later - I've been temporarily ensconced in my old bedroom at my folks' house. Cooling my jets, staying straight (nor home vs. hetero, you gossip-mongers!), writing songs (sell the hog and bet the dough on "Everything's OK" as our next hit - I use the term advisedly), and in general, regrouping mentally for the next round in the highly lucrative & rewarding field of... PUNK ROCK!! (Was that sentence long enough for you?) So, since I'm half broke - okay, totally broke - I've been kind of half-heartedly looking to do some sort of work. My brother Geordie is the captain on the Carol Ann out of Portsmouth, New Hampshire - a commercial fishing boat 55 feet long that gill-nets about 80 miles out in the ocean. They go out for 5 or 6 days at a time usually, and when one crew member got hurt, my folks both ganged up on me and told me to go for it and ask Geordie if he needed help. You know, I consider myself pretty tough. But when those two old crows - er, my parents - started crabbing at me to "at least try it once and see what it's like to earn an honest buck" - well... I caved in and made the fateful call to my brother. To my argument that I was "too sensitive for that type of work," my heretofore meek & mild parents snorted in disgust and made vague references to bunking me out in the garage. Christ!!! For a couple of old bags that should be thinking about the hereafter, they can be as stubborn as an army mule at times. Showing the winning form that garnered them few accolades from a thankless, sniveling brood of 8 kids in days gone by, I kowtowed to them and somehow found myself Third Mate on the Carol Ann one cold night at 2:00 a.m. steaming out of port and heading in the wild blue yonder - literally!!!

So, I thought, seeing the land slip away, this is where the cruel hand of fate has flung me. Far from the adoring throngs of... well, hundreds of sometimes screaming fans. Boy oh boy, I did it this time. The only sign of the charming, graceful punk rocker about town I had left was my trust 7-hole rubber-tip black Chuck

Taylor Converse hi-tops and my Black Flag baseball hat. I refused to give that up. No way, pal!!! The sneakers might have to give way to fishing boots, I may have to wear some rather outlandish foul-weather gear, I may have to wear my sweat-suit for 5 days to be comfortable under the gear - but the Black Flag hat stays put!! I may have fallen back 5 yards and punted as far as my "no mindless, menial labor" rule was concerned, but in one regard I still felt ok. And that was the old Black Flag hat. Come Hell or high water - and I encountered both many times on that trip - the hat stayed.



The Carol Ann at dock (Photo by Joe King)

I did bring my cool mirrored wraparound snowboarder-type sunglasses that would've gone great with the Black Flag hat. But out there, the effect would have fallen on deaf ears.

Hey, there's a Vapidism if I ever saw one. Dan Vapid being the king of twisted sayings like, "he don't know his ass from shoe polish," or "he don't know shit from a hole in the ground." When I pointed out to Vapid that I believed he'd gotten his sayings twisted, he just shrugged and said, "So I made up a new one. He *don't* know his ass from shoe polish!" I dropped it 'cause he started making sense to me at the time. Vapid's interesting discourse on the proper use of the words "lend" and "borrow" also got me screwed up. I also started using them wrong - "Hey, pal, can you borrow me a buck?" Anyway, all this thought

of absorbing interest is hardly germane to the issue, and I'd rather not delve into those murky waters known as Vapid's vocabulary at this moment, so let's get back on track here.

Before I forget, though - I gotta share another good one. We were on tour with the Hi-Fives last summer and Murph from the Cretins came out with us on guitar. One day, we were talking about scummy, crusty punks that never bathe - not mentioning any names or anything - and someone made a minor remark about Murph's hygiene (or lack thereof.) He came out with a good one: "I'll tell you guys one thing, you will never see me smell." We had a hearty chuckle over that one. Lemme tell ya, Murph did get picked on a bit, but I just can't help give shit to someone who orders a large meatball sub, Mountain Dew, and BBQ potato chips at 9:00 a.m. in some godforsaken hellhole of a Canadian gas station - and proceeds to eat it before we're even done filling the tank. With a diet like that, I'll bet you either don't shit for a week... or that's all you fucking do.

Anyway, we were on a fishing trip, weren't we? Oh yeah. So I had the Black Flag hat, a set of big balls for starting an offshore fishing career at the end of October, and a lofty position as Third Mate/Cabin Boy on the Carol Ann. My dad later told me that on the depth chart, as far as hiring potential help on the boat was concerned, I just barely nosed out my brother Georgie's wife, which was quite an ego booster - she's 8 months pregnant.

The first night I stayed up with my brother while the other two guys slept. It was rad - the ocean smelled great and I saw the sun come up as we seemingly steamed towards the edge of the world. The vapor trails of the passing airliners, crisscrossed overhead at weird angles, looked like they were spraypainting mindless designs in the deep blue sky. I really do love being on boats - we always went fishing on my dad's boat when we were kids. Finally, I crashed in the early morning. It was 8 or 9 hours to cruise to the fishing grounds and I fell asleep immediately. There's something really soothing to be all snug in your bunk and feel the boat get tossed around in the ocean. Knowing your skinny ass is only separated from the cold ocean by about 2 inches of wood and fiberglass.

We arrived at the fishing grounds around 11:00 a.m. (I was gonna say "we arrived at 11:00 a.m. in the morning," but I didn't want you to think Murph was ghost-writing this thing,) and started setting nets. It was me - useless as tits on a fucking canary - and Georgie the captain, Erol the regular dude on the boat, and my personal fave, John. It was John's first trip on this boat but he's fished for a few years. He's into punk rock and knows the Queers and even endeared himself to me further by quoting certain lines from "Deborah Jean." I was trying to figure out who John reminded me of, and then it came to me in a flash. He's a perfect composite of two people in my personal punk rock Pantheon. You won't believe this, but... Johnny Puke and Wimpy. There's a mixture stronger than cayenne pepper, eh? John has a line of bullshit that old Johnny Puke would be more than proud to sponsor - and has a

little bit of Wimpy in his looks and ability to talk with a half-smoked Camel non-filter in his mouth. John's a great guy. Very interesting to listen to. One minute he's "a big environmentalist" and "real big on the environment and stuff." And two minutes later he's letting us know that if he ever sees another fucking bald eagle, he'd shoot it in a second. "Worse than fucking seagulls," he said. "Just goddamn vultures, that's all bald eagles are." We were talking about girls and I told him that I'd just started seeing some new chick. He further endeared himself to me by giving me a good nudge in the ribs and saying, "Dude, I love my old lady. She's built like a fucking tank." When he started telling me how fishing was honest work, just like Jesus did it, except Jesus probably used cork for floaters instead of plastic - I fought the urge to ask him about Chappaquiddick or how the pyramids were built and tuned out.

Anyway, we set nets the first day and just it fairly easy. Erol & Georgie work together good. John's a good worker too, so I kind of tried to adjust to the ever-sloping pitch of the deck. I really did learn a lot too.

So we were kind of relaxing that night. Then I had to address one of my evening rituals - the nightly shit. Since my last name's King, I guess you could call it the "Knightly Shit" but I'll shut up. You just piss over the side, but I couldn't see where you shit. Georgie said just grab a 5-gallon bucket, fill it halfway with water, sit out on deck on top of said bucket, and crap... taking care to bring something to wipe your ass with. Well, my bowels being in revolt, I was forced to endure the humiliating spectacle of me plunking what skinny ass I have down on the bucket and letting go. Never again will I complain about the toilets (or what passes for them) in Italy or Japan - or Denny's, for that matter. On a dirty truck stop in Western Texas. Hey, what's a little case of the crabs compared to sitting on a green



5-gallon bucket 80 miles out to sea - trying like hell not to fall over on your side with a bucket stuck on your ass. That'd be real cool, having to rouse your mates to come over and pry the shit-bucket off your ass as you valiantly try to save face with small talk. "So, you guys seen *The Full Monty*? I hear it's good." With your goddamn sweatpants down around your ankles.

So I did the shit - we didn't have any big swells as I did my duty - but as soon as I got in the cabin, oh boy. A big one came through. I would've been fucked if I had still been on the bucket. God spared the crew the spectacle of me toppling over on the (very) humble throne and having to ask for help. Christ.

The next day, we started pulling nets and I was quickly baptized in the ways of the fishing trade. You pull the nets, pick the fish out, and throw 'em in a kind of pen. After the net's all in, you start cutting and gutting the fish. I was the gutter. There I was, good old Joe Queer, covered with blood, guts, and fish scales, busting what little ass I have. It was ok though. We worked at least 12-13 hours each day. And let me tell ya - it's rough work. I thought I was in fairly good shape 'cause I've been riding my bike 25-30 miles almost every day. Boy, was I wrong. We busted ass out there. I haven't worked that hard since I was working construction pouring concrete for a living many moons ago. We finished after dark, at some roast chicken and potatoes, and promptly crashed. We anchored at one spot and you leave running lights on - so you don't need anyone on watch. There's an alarm that goes off if any boat comes within 2 1/2 miles of you. Boy, did I sleep that night.

Geordie got us up at 5:00 a.m. (in the morning, Murph) and I was out like a light. Erol & John went to smoke some weed on deck. I eschewed the coffee, knowing I needed to get some real sustenance in me. I mean, I love coffee and shit. It's great to drink about 15 cups and talk to some moron about how fucking smart you are and everything. But my body needed food. I asked Geordie where the cereal was. Under the sink. The bag of Fruit Loops was out of the box mostly fallen out. I think that was a leftover from the raccoon that had gotten on the boat when it was docked, and threw his weight around in the pantry. Geordie said it looked like a hand grenade went off at the Safeway in there. Anyway, he found another box of cornflakes with mold on the outside, but seemingly intact inside. He reached in and gobbled a few flakes down. "Yeah, Joe, they're fresh, go for 'em," he said. So I asked where the bowls were. A frenzied search failed to find any. "Oh shit, I left them in the truck!" So I ate

my corn flakes in a saucepan, nibbling on a banana on the side. It was quiet for a minute and then Geordie says, "Jesus, look at these two broads eating each other other out." I look over and he's knee deep in a well-thumbed copy of *Swank* or *Cheri* or *Jugs* - I'm not sure. A rude publication even to hardcore porn fans. I just cracked up. In the human zoo that fate has caused to surround me, I felt right at home on that boat.

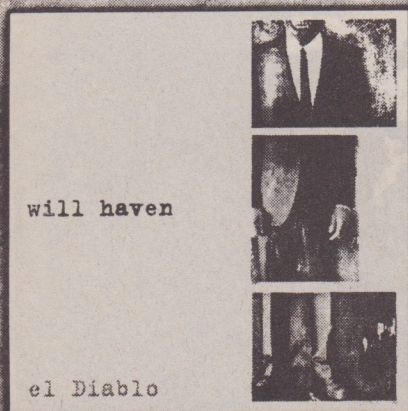
You know how it is on tour. Just endless bullshit, and everybody reverts back to the lowest common denominator in every aspect of their life on the road. As long as you can function - and let's face it, you don't have to be no brain surgeon to be on a punk rock tour (though I've seen many people who can't even handle that, believe me) - you'll get along fine. You wake up at 3 a.m. (in the morning - that's right, everybody) and there's always two dildos talking. "Did you hear so and so from REM is gay?" Ah.... Life on the road. And the boat's not much different. 'Cause in a boat or a punk band on tour, you're still figuratively thumbing your nose at "normal life" as most people live it. 9 - 5 office jobs, staying at one job for 20 years, and shit like that. Fucking normals, I hate 'em. I mean, being in a band has its drawbacks, and a lot of people might not like it - but it ain't an office job. I mean, I'd rather die on my feet than live on my knees, y'know? Oh well, so much for the dissertation on life through the eyes of Joe Queer, Punk Rocker.

Where was I? Oh yeah, so we busted ass a few more days, and my left hand fucking got cashed. Not gashed. Cashed. The tendons got all creaky. It sounds like the front door on *House On Haunted Hill*, if you know what I mean. Thank god a storm blew in so we got to come home a day early. I mean, I just got a new girlfriend - well, I guess she's my girlfriend. John asked if we were going out and I told him I wasn't sure but I definitely put salt on her tail - and I missed her. She's a punk rock type chick and real friendly, and she even works. That's a new one for me. The last one kinda drained me dry. She owes me a ton of money & I just saw her this afternoon at 8:00 a.m. (just wanted to see if you were still awake) and I asked her if she was ever going to pay me back. She said no - so I'm excited to

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have a G.F. that's working, even it is in a strip club. God, I get off on these tangents, don't I?

So we came in early. I took a watch. It's pretty routine but it was cool to be on the bridge with everyone else sleeping and a 55 foot boat under my control, kind of. You set the autopilot and just keep an eye on the radar for other boats ahead and shit, so it's easy. Halloween night, we got in real late, about 2:00 a.m., and docked, and Geordie drove me home. I asked John what he was up to for the weekend. "Whoa, dude, I'm getting laid and getting fucked up and sleeping." Noble ambitions, I thought. Except for getting fucked up, 'cause I'm pure as the driven snow these days. Well, Geordie came by and asked me to go out again tomorrow night, so I'm going to do a few trips in November. Debbie's gonna drop the puppy (have a baby, you morons) in early December so Geordie's not fishing for a while, and his regular crew member should be all healed, so I don't know what will happen then. But I'm going for it for now. I can't wait to get back to that shit bucket and try to hang on. So now I'm gonna call the girlfriend and see what's up. Aloha, mahola, and fuck you!!!

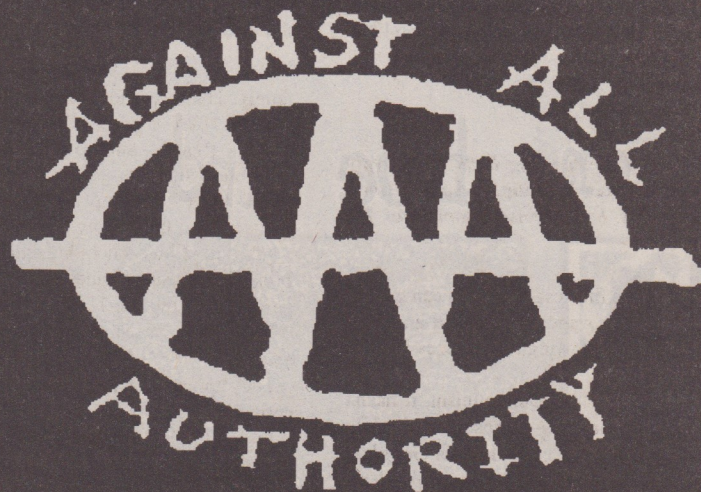
Before I go, I wanna let people know what be up with the fabulous Queers. Ok, I'm going to record an album of super-short, fast punk tunes with the original lineup of the Queers - me, Tulu, and Wimpy, with some kid named Geoff on bass. We haven't actually played together in about 12 years, so I'm really excited to do this project. We're going to write all the songs together in like two days - like we used to - we get the song titles together ahead of time - mutually approve them - and then just write the tunes. Then we're going to record the album in one day. Oh yeah, it'll be great. I mean, there's many imitations and wannabes (Tunnel Rats, take a bow) but me,

Tulu, and Wimpy are the real Tabasco, mofo - and don't you ever forget it. Ben Weasel thought it was a gret idea. So that should be done in December.

Next, I'm jamming with Murph on bass, Jimmy H. on drums, and J.J. Rassler on guitar, and we're doing an album of covers. Mostly more obscure tunes from the early 60's and late 50's. "Little Town Flirt" by Del Shannon, "Be My Baby" by the Ronettes, and a killer tune by Jan & Dean called "I Found A Girl." I can't wait to record that one. It'll be great. The cover album's going to be a Queers album - *Same Old Circus, Different Clowns!!* Hubie's doing great, we're just taking a break after nearly 4 years of straight touring. I know there's all sorts of rumors flying around about us but I can assure you - straight from Joe Queer - that the Queers live! I'm working on songs for the next original Queers album too - *Everything's O.K.* "Smiley Smile," "She's The Man," "I Don't Wanna Be A Loser." The list goes on and on... so stay tuned. Chris from John Cougar Concentration Camp is on guitar with us. Hubie will never leave. I'm down with Hubie. J.J. Rassler is our manager/producer/songwriter. Which leaves... B Face. I haven't had much contact with the Face lately. He's with the Groovie Ghoulies on tour. I wish him well. He may be back, but good money says he's gone. He's OK. He just has to go do his own thing. I mean, I've written or co-written every original song the Queers have ever done, so I ain't kissing no one's ass to be in my band. Sorry. Anyway, we'll be back out on tour by Spring. I can't wait. I miss all you crazy fuckers.

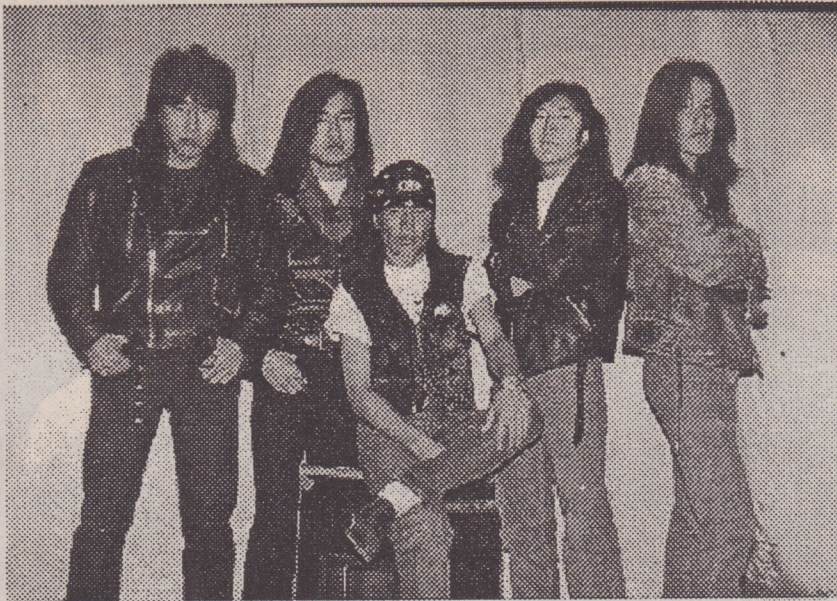
Later days & better lays,

JOE QUEER



January 13th 1998





Hard To Be Hurd

or, Mykel Board meets the only heavy metal band in Outer Mongolia

by Mykel Board

*[The following is a chapter from a forthcoming book, tentatively titled **Even A Daughter Is Better Than Nothing**, to be published by whoever pays the most. It has been revised somewhat for inclusion in **Jersey Beat**.*

Think of the last place on Earth. The furthest away you can go and then some. A desert with a few camels wandering around an oasis. The cold empty steppe, a Siberian wind blowing snow dunes. You've thought of Mongolia.

Though it's changed some since the fall of Communism, it hasn't changed much. Most people still live in gers— those round white tents used since the times of Chinggis (you know him as *Genghis*) Khan. Men and women wear the traditional deel— kind of a less-fancy, warmer kimono. It's the same kind of clothes they've worn for centuries. They listen to the same music, too.

Put two Mongols together and one will start singing. Music runs in the blood of the people. It gets them through the tough times— and there are lots of them in Outer Mongolia.

The music is slow. Their lyrics are about love lost or dreams of the countryside after too long in the concrete and cement of the city. Yes, rock'n'roll came to Mongolia. But it came with a Mongolian flavor. Slow ballads about love lost or dreams of the countryside after too long... blah blah blah.

The first Mongolian rock band was called (what else?) *Chinggis Khan*. Inspired by the hippie revolution, they started in 1970 and became hugely popular. They've played in Russia and at Budokan in Japan. You can still hear them on the radio. At their concerts, the crowd stands like they did at the Fillmore in the 60s. People join hands and sway back and forth singing together like one big happy

family. That was Mongolian rock.

Until 1990, that is. That year is the low-point for Mongolian society. Russia pulls out of the country, leaving the economy in shambles. Students go on a hunger strike to end Communist rule. Store shelves are empty. People spend their last tugrik on vodka. They need to forget how bad their lives are.

A group of highschool kids meets in the stairwell after school. They bring their acoustic guitars and a snare drum obtained through "not very proper" means. They set up right there— on the landing.

"One, two, three... Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away....!"

They play The Beatles songs they've heard on the radio. They try to copy the *Chinggis Khan* tunes they've heard in concert.

In 1991, Ganbayar, the oldest of them, and the group's leader/drummer, gets hold of a cassette by the German band *Helloween*. After that, HURD is born.

Pronounced 'Hort,' the name means 'speed.' That's what they play; or at least, that's the best of what they play.

A huge poster hangs on the wall across from the Central Post Office in Ulaanbaatar. Skulls and guitars. In Mongolian Cyrillic, above the skulls is the word HURD. Five dates are listed, all at the same fancy concert hall. The same band, no opener, two hours each night.

Entrance is 700 tugriks (about a dollar and a half) for an orchestra seat. The show sells out — for every night.

There are 1500 seats in the National Concert Hall. It's modern and white with coffin-shaped pillars in front of a three-story, neo-classic building. It could be in Washington or New York. If it were, it would house the local philharmonic. But it's not the philharmonic that's playing tonight. It's HURD!

A giant banner with more skulls and guitars hangs in front. The

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name HURD drips in blood-like cyrillic letters above the drawing. Outside, a crowd gathers. It is not a rock crowd like you'd see anywhere else. Sure, there are a few motorcycle jackets. One girl wears a short tight leather dress. But there are also old women in deels.

A young mother, carries her toddler tightly wrapped in a blanket. Huddled to one side is a group of very official-looking men. Their black cashmere coats hang open over their black suits and ties. A ten year old, wearing baggy pants and a backwards baseball hat, shares a Walkman earphone with an identically dressed friend. Every age, gender, and type of Mongol is here to see the band.

When the door opens, a city cop in a leather jacket and fur hat stands next to the female ticket-taker. Those with 700 tugrik tickets are ushered to the lower level. The 500 tugrik crowd is sent to the balcony.

Each ticket has a row and seat number. Inside are rows with plush velvet-covered seats to match. Not what you'd get if you were seeing Megadeath in Cleveland.

A ruffled white curtain hangs in front of the stage. If it rose to reveal tap dancers with canes, it wouldn't look out of place. A runway extends from the stage into the audience. From the towering speakers, comes a weird musical mix. Some DEEP PURPLE and ANTHRAX, some SKATMAN. The rest, I've never heard before.

At seven o'clock, the official starting time, the crowd starts applauding, whistling, stamping their feet. The canned music on the speakers gets louder. Occasionally, random notes from tuning guitars come from behind the curtain. Then, the houselights dim and the curtains open.

The stage is black. On it are large red and white boxes, some 15 feet high. They're oddly shaped and at odd angles. In the back, on the biggest rectangle, is the drummer, now banging away. Then come the guitar players, one at a time.

The band wears black jeans, black t-shirts with some full-color pictures of bands I've never heard of, and black leather jackets. Then comes the vocalist, carrying a cordless mic. He's dressed like the others, except, instead of black levis, he wears what look like Calvin Klein underpants. They could be thigh-length jockey shorts, or bicycle pants. Axl Rose? It's hard to tell. What isn't hard to tell is that either the guy is all potatoes and no meat — or he stuffs.

The band launches a blast of three speedmetal songs in a row. With hooks that'll stay in my mind for weeks. No matter how fast they get, they never lose the melody.

The singer leaps all over the stage. He runs to the drums, out to the audience, up on top of the speakers, climbing over the rail to the side balcony. The guitar players, using cordless guitars, race back and forth across the stage. They're like suddenly uncaged animals, wanting to cover every inch of their new freedom. Their song 'Chonno' (wolf) howls through the auditorium.

The crowd is silent. The old women look with jaws hung open. The men in suits sit with smiles frozen onto their faces. The teens and moms with their kids lean forward intently watching — not disapproving, but not sure.

After the third song, the guitarist slows down. The singer moves to the front of the stage. He puts one leg up on the monitor. In a voice closer to crooning than metal growl or falsetto, he sings a ballad. It's a GUNS N ROSES-type song with slow guitar breaks and plaintive gestures. Without knowing a single Mongolian word, you know this is a love song. And the crowd loves it.

The first chords set the audience applauding. The first words send them smiling, swaying back and forth for the rest of the song. The next song, too, is a ballad. It's on the radio. The hit. By the fourth slow song, the crowd is on its feet. They stand in their seats, swaying back and forth, arms over their heads waving. Neighbors' hands touch. They grab hold. A human love chain. Far in the back of the orchestra seats, someone holds a cigarette lighter, flame aloft.

The slow-songs series lasts another half hour. The crowd eats it up, like an elephant snorting peanuts from the floor of its cage. Then

the ballads stop. There's a power chord. Two. A buzzsaw guitar. The click of the fuzz box. SPEED returns.

With new energy, the band runs back and forth along the stage. The smoke machine farts it's grey chemical. Colored lights flash. The singer climbs to the outskirts of the runway, then zooms back. The guitarists and bass player have leaned forward and are swinging their hair in unison. The audience sits down — quiet again.

For the last song, the band switches to mid-tempo with lots of time changes and another fish-catching hook. Then it's over. No "thank you's." No encore. Just curtain down, lights on, and leave.

The next week, I meet with the band.

In the Northern part of Ulaanbaatar, there is a factory. They make



Mykel Board, our man in Mongolia

cement, industrial wire, and those big iron poles that form the centers of highway pillars. There's a constant clang and whir, a neverending clatter of *real* heavy metal. This factory complex, left over from Commie days, was made with THE WORKERS in mind. Pictures of Lenin and the Mongolian Revolutionary hero Sukhbataar still hang in the hallway. In back, there is a "workers' hall," a kind of auditorium. Workers are free to use this area for whatever they want. With a large stage, and hard wooden benches, this is HURD's rehearsal room.

I walk into the hall, saying "Sain bain yy" to the man mixing cement inside the doorway. Passing him, I walk to the main room where the floor is filled with bloody fur, just stripped from it's biological owner. A group of men now work salting the meat and stretching the fur to prepare it for market.

I'm with Uyanga, a friend and translator who has worked at the new private radio station. Not only does she speak excellent English, but she knows the bands and can easily arrange interviews.

We walk past the fur to a long table in front of the stage. At the table sit the members of HURD. Dressed in black leather jackets, and t-shirts, they are a long way from the dell-wearing herdsman hard at work on the just-stripped fur. The band members, warned that we were coming, smile and wave to us.

A young man I recognize as the drummer gets up and shakes my hand. He says something rather long to Uyanga. She laughs, but doesn't translate it.

I apologize for being a few minutes late. They tell me not to worry, because the singer isn't there yet. He shows up a half hour later, making me rejoice that musicians are somehow the same the world over.

While we wait, I show the band some tapes I brought with me: Some SubPop grunge and Earache deathmetal. They grab it like it's gold. They've never heard of any of the bands: TAD, MUDHONEY, NAPALM DEATH. They're all new to them. They take out the insert cards and pour over them, asking what *God's Balls* means. Uyanga doesn't know. I consider pantomiming it, but decide against it.

Then, the singer walks in. I'm saved. He sits at the end of the table crossing his legs, folding his arms. Tall and skinny, he looks much less healthy and energetic than he did on stage. This, however, is the first time I've seen him fully clothed.

Now, the whole band is together. Most of the talking, however, comes from Ganbayar—the drummer and bandleader.

Uyanga tells me the other members are: Otgonbayar on lead guitar; Tomortsog, vocals; and two guys — both named Naranbaatar — one on bass the other on rhythm guitar.

"Should we start the interview?" I ask.

Ganbayar smiles and nods. The others pull up their chairs as if being closer would help me understand their Mongolian.

"What bands do you know in America?" asks Ganbayar. "What do people listen to? What do you call this kind of music?" He points to the MUDHONEY cassette.

"What kind of music does WASP play?" asks one of the Naranbaatars.

It's an hour before I can ask any of my own questions. I tell them I liked the concert, but my tastes were different from that of the audience. The fast stuff was great, I say. Super hooks and tight changes. But the slow ballads — my mother might like them.

"Do mothers in America like metal?" asked Ganbayar.

"Humor doesn't translate." I explain to him. "Anyway, it seems with a name that means SPEED and all those good fast songs, you're only playing slow because of the audience."

"That's right," he says, "You hit the yak on the head. This is all new to Mongolia. We have to teach the audience. It's slow and difficult. In the meantime, we have to live."

"Do you live off your music?" I ask.

His forehead wrinkles in non-comprehension.

"Do you or the other guys in the band have other jobs?"

"Oh no," he says. "HURD is our lives."

"So you live from your royalties?" I ask.

My translator is having a tough time with that one. I try to explain.

"You know, the money you make from record sales and having your songs played on the radio."

Laughter explodes simultaneously from all the band members.

"Such things don't exist in Mongolia," says Ganbayar. "We have no records. They play our cassette on the radio and we thank them. There is no pay."

"Our money comes from concerts," says Otgonbayar. "We play the

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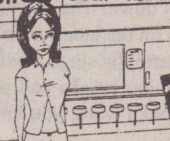


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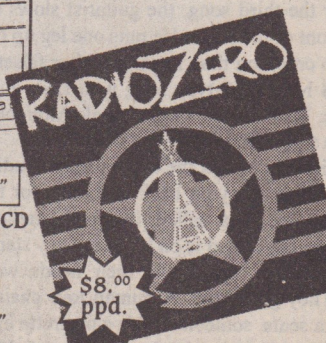
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big concert hall when we can, and small clubs other times. We can sometimes play three times a week."

"Do you play bar mitzvahs?" I ask.

"We play in some bars," says Ganbayar, "What kind of bar is that?"

OK, so I'm gonna have to cut the comedy. "It's not important," I tell him. "I just wanted to know how you earned your money."

"We play one or two songs in some festivals. Sometimes we can do concerts like the ones you saw. Sometimes people hire us to play at special shows for special groups."

"Does that pay the bills?" I ask.

"Not really," he answers, "but we also have the only big PA in town. Renting it out to bands and concerts... THAT pays the bills."

"At least you're not salting skins," I say.

He laughs. That one, he gets.

"It sounds like a tough way to live," I continue. "How many others are doing it? In fact, how many rock bands are there in Mongolia?"

It seems like a question they've heard before. They laugh, again.

"There are less than twenty pop bands in Mongolia..." says the other Naranbaatar.

"But there is only one ROCK band," finishes Ganbayar, "HURD."

He asks me the difference between 'pop' and 'rock.'

"Rock is louder, faster, and more aggressive," I tell him. "Pop is smiley-faced."

He nods. "Then we are the only ROCK band in Mongolia."

Rather than a source of pride, however, this bothers them.

"We're trying to educate the audience. We play the slow songs to catch them. Then, once we get them around the neck, we shake them with the hard fast songs. This is all new to Mongolian audiences. They're not really ready for it."

"But you're unique," I say. "Aren't you happy there's no one else

like you?"

"Happy?" says the drummer, "Why be happy? We're alone! We'd like to see twenty bands play like us. A hundred bands! But there aren't a hundred of bands in all Mongolia."

Otgonbayar jumps in, "Kids come up to us on the street. They say they want to start a band. They say they want to be just like us. We take them here. Show them our guitars. Teach them tricks. But we know they'll never make it. They can't buy instruments. They can't find places to play. There is nowhere to go. How can we like that?"

So they do what they can. Copping a Metallica tape from me, some guitar strings from a recent traveler to Singapore. Someday, maybe, they'll play in Russia, even Moscow. Like Jimi Hendrix going to England, maybe the trip abroad will bring them fame back home. But in Mongolia, fame back home doesn't get you very much. Even when you're the only ROCK band in the country.

SIDEBAR:

HURD wants to make as many international connections as possible. You can (and should) write to them: "Hurd," XYPD, c/o Naranbaatar, PO Box 177, Post Office 46, Ulaanbaatar 210646, Mongolia. Send them tapes, CDs, guitar picks, strings, drumheads, whatever you can spare. Most of all, send 'em encouragement—they need it.

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DUTCH TREAT: Netherlands Scene Report

The following scene report came to us via the Internet.

By Matt Sutherlin

I used to live in Irvine, California, but three years ago began my European experience by moving to the Netherlands. I have found the scene here to be interesting and fun, even though the amount of shows in no way competes with that of Southern California. I live in The Hague, which is about 30 minutes south of Amsterdam, and therefore know the most about the scene around The Hague. That's why I'm only going to talk about this area, because I can't possibly report on the whole country.

The currency in the Netherlands is the guilder, and one guilder is equal to about two American dollars now. CDs here cost between 35 and 40 guilders, but are more often 40. Since this is about \$20, we usually get our CDs through mail order. It costs a lot less, and if we can get a friend in America to allow the use of his house as a mailing address, we can usually avoid all the taxes for importing the CDs. On the occasion that it's necessary to get a CD here, there are a few places you can go. First, and probably best, is the Plaatboef in The Hague. They have a good selection, keep current on new releases, and prices are usually only 35 guilders. Plato in The Hague is good too, but the selection isn't nearly as great. In the harbor on the outskirts of The Hague lies Hardcore. It's a skateshop, and CDs are always 40 guilders. They have an odd assortment of music, but it is possible to get lucky and find some semi-rare discs.

Most of the good places to see bands in The Hague are bars. This is not a problem for younger punks, since the drinking age is 16, and no one really cares if you're not old enough. One good bar downtown in The Hague is Confusion. Half the bands that play here are punk bands, and the other half are metal bands. The punk bands that play here are really good, but since they don't post which bands are playing when, you have to be lucky and show up on the right night. Another bar is the Twilight Zone in

Wassenaar, which is a suburb of The Hague. It is bigger than Confusion, and has punk bands more often. The LVC in Leiden is a mid-sized hall, where some really good bands play. The other night we saw the Mr. T Experience and the Groovie Ghoulies play there. Shows are really cheap, sometimes as low as 10 guilders (which is cheap by European standards). There is also a punk disco in The Hague, which has good bands play every night. Turtlehead seems to like to play here often.

Due to noise regulation laws and easily upset neighbors, basement shows don't happen here very often. Most people's basements are just small storage cellars anyway. Shows in rented halls are a frequent occurrence,



and are really fun to go to. Usually it's just lots of bands from local schools putting on the shows just to be able to play, and many punks show up for these. They are usually only 5 guilders, and there are about five bands. People of all ages show up, and everyone has a blast. This is the really great thing about the Dutch scene. It doesn't matter how old you are, or if you even speak the same language, because everyone hangs out together at the shows. We never have fights occur at the shows, mainly because skins don't bother to come to the shows. People get a bit rough after too much beer, but it never gets as violent as shows in America sometimes do.

KOOTCHIE, KOOTCHIE, KOO!

I hope I've tickled your fancy. Now tickle mine! I've got a ton of punk and alternative zines, cassettes, records and general STUFF that I'm auctioning to the highest bidder. If you want the full list send a SASE to:



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Most of the bands that we see in bars and other places don't seem to announce their names, so I couldn't tell you the names of a lot of the bands that we've seen. It's really too bad, since some of them were really good. Anyway, one of the better local bands is the Tobascos. This band could best be described as a cross between Green Day and Moral Crux. These guys never seem to drag, and the lyrics are fun, too. They play shows in Leiden a lot, but do tend to play in the surrounding areas as well. The Dollybirds are really good, too. They are rockabilly punk with a metal edge. Most of their songs are fast and short, but one is about six minutes long, and there are a lot of long breaks so you can't tell if it's actually over. Suburban Vermin is a band made of American high schoolers. They play a style that's a cross between the Mr. T Experience and old Queers. They also do a cover of "I Wanna Be A Homosexual" by Screeching Weasel, but they don't have very good equipment, and it's hard to hear some of the instruments sometimes.

Overall, the scene here in the Netherlands is a really good one. The only problem is that bands never seem to tour through here. Neither American bands nor European bands. Because of this, people tend to get bored, since they see the same bands over and over again. When bands do tour through here, it's a nice change. I think that if one thing could greatly improve things here, it would have to be having more bands tour through the Netherlands. For those bands that do, I'd like to thank them, and to other bands, I'd like to tell them that many people would appreciate your coming here.

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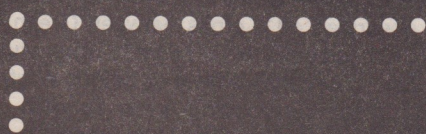
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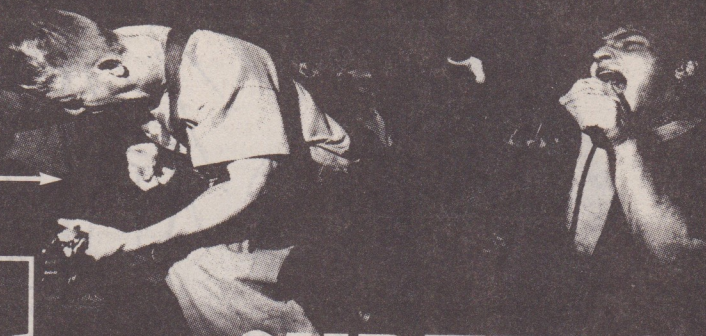
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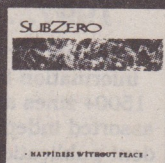
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TV SOUND

By Tom Brebric

TV Sound is a 3 piece from Hudson County, NJ who have been around for only a few months, but I would have never guessed that by their live set. TVS captures the fun and essence of past melodic pop bands like The Jam while still being original and not retro. This interview was conducted in a local bar and TVS proved to be the nicest bunch of guys by putting up with me showing up late. The band consists of Dave DellaFerra on Bass and Vocals, Paul Biancal on Drums, and Jeff Maiore on Guitar and Vocals.



TV Sound: I was at the library and punched in Jersey Beat on the Internet and was surprised by all the back issues available and all the major names that made it in there before they hit the big time.

JB: All that and still non-profit! Who are you working with now for producing your Demo?

TVS: This guy Tom Lucas in South Orange (Chesterview Studios), he worked with DGeneration and the Bitters.

JB: Are all of you from Kearny?

TVS: A pound of haggis, meat pies, soccer games, yep, Scottish.

JB: Aside from your tape having that "Jam" sound, it also captures that sense of fun from the early 80s -when everything wasn't so electronic.

TVS: When people ask us what we play, we unconsciously can't reference anything modern, but it's not a rip off of the Clash or the Jam. The Jam wasn't something that was commercially viable in the U.S., but then again you have kids who never heard of the Sex Pistols buying up Rancid and Green Day. Hey, you know you caught us at only our second show. The gigs are just

starting to come in and we're doing everything ourselves. We did Maxwells, Court Tavern coming up, a show in NYC. We spent the summer sending out tapes. A lot of the big labels like Island and Geffen sent them back because we did not have representation. One major though, that prefers to remain anonymous, took our tape and called us back.

JB: In all these years that I've been doing interviews I've never heard of a label not listening to someone's product due to lack of representation.

TVS: We think it might have to do with legal issues. This one major called us within a few days of getting our tape. They want us to do a show in NYC. This NYC show is sort of a litmus test for us to see how we perform under pressure. When it comes to having to have management, we feel they should approach us rather than us getting a manager and chasing record companies.

JB: What types of bands have you been playing with?

TVS: We're playing with the Subterraneans and Dead Planet Babies. Sometimes we get hooked up with more hardcore bands, but it's almost as if there is no one to link us up with. One thing that is really sad is that when we tell people who aren't into new music that we're in a band, and they ask us if we're playing Fatso's or the Cadillac Bar. These people don't realize that there is other music than the top 20 that cover bands play.

JB: It's the old lament of crappy cover bands dominating the NJ scene. I hope that people are open-minded enough to give bands a chance.

TVS: Our songs are like two and a half to three minute pop songs, but pop in the most flattering sense, not just rubbish or sugary pop. We'd like to think we're more like bands that played in the era of the Buzacocks, Clash, Gen-x, Stiff Little Fingers. We're hoping we can get any label, small or large, interested in us so we can put something out. We've been playing a lot of clubs. We don't want to be stuck as a house band that plays the same club every other weekend.

JB: What about smaller labels?

TVS: We kicked around the idea of doing a CD ourselves, but what about promotion and distribution? I don't want to make it sound pretentious, but I don't think too many labels will invest the \$ since we're tough to categorize. It's not current like rap or ska, yet if you call it retro, it takes on other connotations. With genre music, the record companies seem to want the next band to sound like the last band. Unless you're on the first wave of that it's just something to follow.

JB: It could be worse, the 80's metal bands with the big hair are making a comeback.

TVS: That won't attract the younger audiences like ska will. I just don't want to hear Poison or Warrant again. We want to get to a point where we can jump in a van and have a place to play like every other night across the country.

JB: You'd be willing to give up your day jobs.

TVS: Yeah, that wouldn't be a problem, like in a second.

JB: (I'm handed a new three song demo) How long did this take and did you produce it yourselves?

TVS: It only took like four hours. It was done on a 24 track, he (Tom Lucas) knows what we want. It's straight to the board with the bass.

JB: You're from Kearny, NJ. So are the Bitters and a few other local bands that seem to share a British sound... why do you think that is?

TVS: When we were in the 7th or 8th grade, these kids who went to England were bringing back records by bands like Kings of the Wild Frontier. You had your Zeppelin fans in one corner of the school, your Stones fans, and then there was this little contingent who were into new groups from the UK like the Waterboys, the Pogues. That and playing soccer is what got us exposed to the music. If you look at any of our record collections you'll see that it's 90% British bands. That and like the NY Dolls and the early CBGBs scene.

JB: You're close enough to Hoboken, what do you think of the current scene there.

TVS: Hoboken doesn't really have a scene. We played with 4 other bands at LoveSexy and that was a great show. It was crowded and all the bands were from Jersey. They'd have a good thing going but they don't book shows every week. Right now we just want to play out a lot and generate some interest.

Anyone wanting to contact TV Sound (or send them \$3 for a demo) can contact them at 35 Alpine Place, Kearny, NJ 07032.

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FLICK

Oran Thornton, lead guitar, vocals - age 18
Trevor Thornton, lead vocals, guitar - age 14
Eve Hill, bass - age 24
Paul "Adam" McGrath, drums - age 16

They're so young that you have to wonder if their major label deal with Columbia Records violates any of the child labor laws. But don't let their cherubic appearance fool you. The kids in Flick don't intend to infest the nation's malls or wallpaper the bedroom walls of prepubescent girls with their pinups. They have come to rock and roll.

At 18, lead guitarist Oran Thornton is the veteran of the group, having spent some time in both Jars Of Clay and Johnny Q. Public (a band that Oran says "was signed to a major label and dropped in about a week.") His little brother Trevor, age 14, does most of the singing and plays some guitar as well. Eve Hill is actually the oldest of the group at 24, although she could still pass for a teenager. Wide-eyed and eager, 16-year old Paul (everybody calls him Adam) McGrath rounds out the group on drums.

Flick was in New York in late September to perform at a Columbia Records industry-only showcase, still a little awestruck from all that had happened to them in such a short time but happy to spend an hour with me over sodas and bottled water in the lounge of their hotel. We started out by talking about how Flick came together.

"I've been playing in bands for a long time, and Trevor's been playing guitar for six or seven years," says Oran. Neither brother attends high school - they've both been home-schooled for most of their lives - which means a lot of time together around the house, most of it spent making music. "For the last three or four years, we've been playing together around home and writing songs, and I've been making demos. We'd play small coffee shops acoustic, things like that." Somewhere around the beginning of 1997, the boys decided they needed a band and started to look beyond the borders of their tiny home town of Stockton, Missouri.

They found bassist Eve Hill and drummer Adam McGrath in nearby Springfield, MO. "I actually knew Trevor and Oran's mother, because I was working in a restaurant and she would come in and eat, and we talked a lot about the music scene,"



says Eve. "She was always talking about her two sons being into music, and I was playing around in some local bands, so that's how I was introduced to the Thorntons. So when they started looking around for a bass and a drummer, they thought of me and asked me to come over and jam with them. And it just kind of worked out."

"There's nowhere to play at all in Stockton," says Oran, "so we played all our early gigs in Springfield." A college town, Springfield at least had a few clubs and something of a local band scene. "We just started playing out, and the clubs started liking us and having us back, and then they started asking us to come open for some of the signed acts that came through town. Then those acts would go back and tell their record companies about us, tell their A&R guys, y'know, and the word just kind of spread naturally like that. It was actually pretty fast."

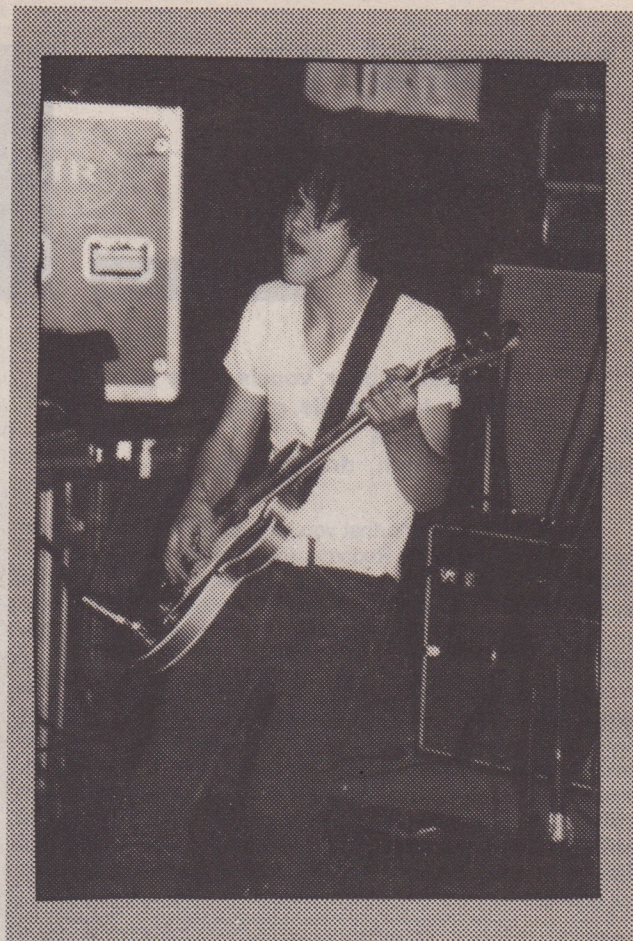
'We want people to like our music only because they like our music. Our age should be irrelevant. Bands like the Who and Led Zeppelin, when they first started out, Keith Moon was like 15 when they started the Who. They were really young but they were just an amazing rock band and that's all anybody cared about.'

Pretty fast? They obviously believe in understatement in Missouri. Less than nine months after getting together, Flick found themselves signed to Columbia Records, flying coast to coast (and over to England) to showcase for label execs, playing the CMJ Music Festival in New York, and recording their first full-length album in Nashville. Not bad for a band with two members not even old enough to drive.

"You know, usually we don't even talk about our age, just because we don't want to see a big issue made of it," stresses Oran. "We want people to like our music only because they like our music. Our age should be irrelevant. Bands like the Who and Led Zeppelin, when they first started out, Keith Moon was like 15 when they started the Who. They were really young but they were just an amazing rock band and that's all anybody cared about. Some people don't even know how old we really are when they come to see us, because, like I said, we don't ever talk about it. And sometimes you can disguise how old you are up on stage. What's funny is that a lot of people see us and think Eve is the youngest, and she's really the oldest."

Musically, Flick avoids comparisons with the sugar-coated power-pop of "MmmBop" by mixing swirly psychedelic fuzz and crunch classic-rock guitar in with their melodies and lyrics. The group's debut EP, originally released on a small indie and being re-released on Columbia this fall, has drawn comparisons with both the Eighties new-wave pop of Let's Active and the slinky crunch of T Rex. Which is fine with Flick, except that they'd never heard of either band until the reviews started rolling in.

"We were all into different things growing up, from Hendrix to Led Zeppelin," says Oran. "Being from the midwest, you have your cheesy classic rock stations that will play some really good old rock and roll, so I heard a lot of that. And then my favorite bands are Radiohead, Supergrass, a lot of those British pop bands."



Trevor Thornton, age 14

"It's really hard for me to point to who my influences are because I like a lot of different things," adds Eve. "As far as influences for this particular band, I think a lot of us really like a lot of the British pop bands like Radiohead, Boo Radleys, Supergrass, bands like that."

"We get compared to Big Star a lot too, but I never heard them," says Trevor. "And T Rex. I never heard them either. I think we get that because of my haircut. But then I listened to T Rex and I really liked them. So there ya go."

Trevor writes most of the lyrics but admits he hasn't had the kind of life experiences that make for scintillating reading yet. "Even the ones that kinda sound like love songs aren't really love songs," he says. "They're just songs that I wrote just because the words fit."

"The lyrics fit good with the melody so he wrote them down," adds Oran. "That's about as fancy as we get."

As far as signing to a major label so early in their career, Oran says the band didn't really sweat out the decision. "I don't think we really thought a whole lot about it," he says. "We always loved doing it, so my goal from the very beginning, whether we signed to a major label or sold a million records or whatever, was just to make sure we have fun. And if a good opportunity comes up, we figure you might as well take the chance. Hope for the best and expect the worst. We know we don't have a really good chance, that the percentage of bands that actually make it is very slim, but we just really like it, and if it happens, it happens."

By Eva Silverman

I had the pleasure of meeting Holly, the lead singer from the rockin' NYC grrl group Fur, last Spring. But the tape recorder screwed up the first time we tried to do an interview, so we had to meet again about a month later.

The first time I heard Fur was when I was sent the band's "Mira Mira" 7-inch to review for this magazine. After hearing it, I excitedly emailed Fur's record label, Blackout! Records. When I first went to interview Holly, I was a bit nervous as I always get when I do interviews. She reassured me. Holly's attitude towards the band, music, and kids makes me love Fur even more.

Fur is an all powerful pop/punk band with a sweet melody in every song. Holly's voice reminds me a bit of Cyndi Lauper, had she been in a punk band, but without the whiny overdrag. Local to the New York City area, Fur have been around the bend and are planning on touring Europe and the U.S. in the near future. Take my advice, go see them! Go talk to them! You definitely will not be disappointed.

FUR: Meaning cute animals, like the band (not meaning any random porn word or, wearers of fur from animals)

Q: When did you start playing together?

Holly: The band is about five years old. We started in about '92, something like that.

Q: How did you meet?

Holly: I'm really the only member now that was in that band.. We are a trio, so it was me and a friend and she played the bass. We had lots of drummers. Actually we never really had a drummer, usually it was friends. Good drummers from other bands that would do us favors and even on the record, it was the drummer from Murphy's Law at the time. My boyfriend was in Murphy's Law and I said, "we gotta make a record," and he was like "oh, it's no problem, id like to do it." We worked for three and a half years without a member drummer and then we met Rob (who is the drummer now) who hooked up with us. And it was like we have a real band!, we have a member and a drummer and then the bass player just left after we toured Europe and the US as a band. I guess she just wasn't cut out for it. So now we have Sean who is another Blackout! (Records) kid.

Q: How is touring?

Holly: Touring is great. Its actually great and terrible at the same time. You leave your life, and I happen to like my life. At the time, I had a boyfriend ... I liked him. I wasn't like, "I wanna go meet guys on the road." I love my apartment, my cats. But, its like a psych out to leave that behind and live in a van, and eat a little bit different than u probably want to eat. It can be good cuz you don't have any chores or responsibilities and you get to sit around and rest a lot and just play..and drive. It is just a whole different head, and sometimes it can drive you mad, and sometimes it can be the funnest thing in the world. Its like everything.

Q: Is it really difficult when you have to play and drive to the next town the same night?

Holly: We try to make it so that we get to sleep. SO we sleep and we get up at our leisure and then drive and then go on. That is our style. Sometimes we miss sound check and things like that. Some bands like to get up early and drive in the town and eat and hang out and do what they do. That would be very hard for me. I don't like to rush things and id much rather sacrifice sound check. Just get there, play and then unwind and go to sleep and get up the next day.

Q: What was your strangest and most unique experience at a show?

Holly: Well, we sometimes cover this Screwdriver song "Back with a bang." I know that, yeah yeah they are racist and I'm totally against what they are for. Totally. But for me, it was this thing in my mind, the song is great and the people who wrote it are jerks. Are you not allowed to like it? It was really a debate for me. We would do the song and id always make up the words, cuz I didn't really know the words. Apparently it wasn't a White Power song but I would just sing funny things, "Back with a bang," ya know, sing the chorus. People in NYC understood



FUR

Go Grrl Go!

what we were doing, and id always say before the show, "this song is by real jerks," and its weird that they might have a gift to do something beautiful (make music), maybe everyone has something good inside, something like that. So on our tour, we really didn't do it live, it would just be a fun thing to do at a NY show with our friends. On tour you sorta get so bored with your set and we were in Yugoslavia, so we did "Back with a bang", and these kids in the front was Seig Heiling me and I was freaking out cuz there was no stage and all of them had these hateful eyes in my face. They were so scary to me and I was like "no fucking way," and I was singing the song and I'm like "your not my friend, this is not what we're about and I went into this rant after the song. I went off, as much as people could understand, "no one is a higher power or a better, we are so against that." And the promoters are scared shit thinking that there is going to be

a riot like shit got very crazy. We were the first American band to play Yugoslavia after the war, so there hadn't been bands in there for four years or so. I guess bands outside that couldn't get it. SO it was just like 300 kids and it got a bit crazy. It was scary to me, it made me think, I never wanna do that song again, if one person even thinks I'm saying that "I'm down with screwdriver" then maybe its stupid to do it. It still haunts me cuz I love that song, I sing that song cleaning my house...its such a ..they have a knack for real poppy... there's something really great about it.

Q: Who are your musical influences?

Holly: Oh dear. Obviously the Ramones. I grew up loving that. (Something fucked up with the tape and the only other thing I can remember her saying is Wayne Jayne County and then we go into talking about her friend that was in a Madonna video that owns one of Madonna's bras.) Its like a really beautiful color like kind of pink by Christian Dior. Its like a really nice looking bra. Its old, its not one of those pointy things when she was a star. It was like when she was up and coming.

Q: Any other Rock Star clothes?

Holly: I think that's it. Actually, I have a Johnny Thunders pin. I'm not a collector and I'm not all "woo hoo!" over that stuff, I just kinda have it and its kinda funny. I have Lemmy's white shoes. But yeah, Motorhead is a big influence for me, I love Motorhead. There is this presence that just inspires me, how you don't have to be retarded on stage, you can just be there. Poly Sterene is another hero of mine. I like old stuff, I like Billy Holiday.

Q: How do you define your sound?

Holly: To me, its very poppy. I always think of us as a pop band, but pop in the great sense the way I think the Ramones are a pop band. So, bands with melody or a beautiful tune that you want to sing. And I always like to say its a cross between girl group and Motorhead and then really hard in the background.

Q: Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Holly: Gee, ten years I hope I have kids!, actually. Cuz that's my biological clock expires about then. In ten years, I hope I'm hopefully, maybe. I would love to have a successful band that's happening in ten years, but I cant really have that as a goal. Its like wanting to be in the NBA. There's like 10 slots and 70 million people wanting

them. I love what I do and have all the confidence in the world, and music is a quality thing, its great to me. But that doesn't mean I'm going to win the lottery to be the band that gets to be the Ramones, Hole or Nirvana. That's like luck. So, I hope... or at least I know ill be involved in music cuz that's the point of my life and maybe ill be in a successful band or maybe ill be a song writer, writing songs for bands or something like that. Or maybe ill be making kids records!. Who knows? Hopefully I will have lived by the ocean one month a year.

Q: Hopefully not the Jersey Shore!

Holly: I like the Jersey shore! Id go there, I would prefer Florida its more clear. No dirt! I like Seaside Heights, its cool!.

Q: Who do you think listens to your music?

Holly: I remember this question. Young kids, teenagers and little kids. Teens and their 5 and 10 year old brothers and sisters,

definitely. That's our biggest response. Most of our letters are from kids in high schools. All ages shows are our best and favorite because we like to hang out with kids after the show cuz they are the most enthusiastic. And then, everyone I know who has the record and has kids. The kids go crazy for us, so that's kinda the main...

Q: What was the last record you bought?

Holly: Oh, its changed since last time.! I think it might have been, I think the last CD I picked up was Rancid. You know what! Last time, the last CD I bought was

"Lets Go" and this time, the last CD I bought was "Out Come the Wolves." I'm really slow to get things, ill say "Oh, I just got the new Social Distortion" record and its like a year or more old, and I am not a big CD buyer and I don't have the money to buy all the CDs I want. Ill just think of a song and go buy the CD.

Q: What is "FUR"?

Holly: Someone just asked me that question today too. Like an animal, like my cat. Its very innocent, like "meow!". That's so me, its like "meow" this cat has nice FUR, lets call it FUR. People bring a lot to the name, they have all these ideas what it means. But its definitely not fur coat, people always say its politically incorrect. I'm like, "well, we aren't called Fur Coat." Cuz I don't believe in that. But umm, its definitely alive, the animal who has the fur. (Laugh) So,



Holly and our grl Eva

and old men always think its something sexual, but I'm like. I think porno magazines you'll see words that I've never heard to refer to all kinds of things, ill be like "shit!". Its like a slew of words, id never heard the word fur used. People always go like "ooooohhh, fur." Likes its some obscenity, but its not at all, that was never the intention.

Q: What has the band been up to recently?

Holly: Well, actually we just did some recording, I'm all excited. We made a Christmas song, and we are going to try to. We just finished it. And we are going to try to have it pressed and our by December. The flip side is going to be the Fur theme song, which is just like, I wrote it. It was just like, we need a flip side! I just made up a funny song about the band. The Christmas song is really sappy, cuz my songs are like. "Fuck it, I don't care." I'm always like, "its OK in the end". If something bad happens with a guy, I'm like fuck it, I'm going

to be fine. Which is the truth, in real life, that's how I live my life and people should. But that song I just wrote about that moment of heartbreak and horrible feeling. Particularly around the holidays. Its like this sad, sappy Christmas song. I'm all excited about it cuz its just a little different, its kind of slow its cool. Then the other side is pure FUR!

Q: Do you still have the Madonna bra?

Holly: I do still have the Madonna bra. I've worn the Madonna bra. Cuz its so pretty its like peachy pink, Christian Dior, its very nice. I've worn it to the point of, it ripping and falling apart. I want to line or something. There is nothing to sew it to because its sort of a sheer-ish material. I have to get some nice material to line it and so it back together. I should have worn it, so you can see it. But if you come to the show, ill try to remember to wear it. You can try it on! We'll take your picture!

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CHEAP TRICK

Interview & concert photos by
Frank Phobia

Everywhere you look, record companies are pushing reunited original lineups such as Fleetwood Mac, Styx, and the Eagles with mega-grossing concert tours and big-selling reunion albums. The uneducated would probably want to throw Cheap Trick in that pile.

WELL, HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, PUNK.

Let's go back to the beginning: "We wanted to be more like the Sex Pistols. Raw energy. It was 1977. We put out a debut record that was a raw kick in the pants. But it didn't do that well. So the record company (Epic) thought we didn't know what we were doing. They just didn't get it. So they put us together with this producer that wanted to get hit singles out of *In Color*. We thought it sounded wimpy and lame. And it didn't really sell either," recalls bassist Tom Petersson.

So began the recording career of Cheap Trick over two decades ago, the most underrated power pop band the continent has ever known. Seventeen albums, (including a 10" EP and a box set,) over 20 million units sold. Not a bad career, but it's far from over.

Sure, the early tours in support of Kiss, the Who, the Kinks, and AC/DC laid a solid foundation for Cheap Trick to deal with the huge arena success of *Dream Police*. Then followed a decade of ups and downs in the Eighties and early Nineties. The 1988 hit "The Flame" from *Lap Of Luxury* was the band's only Number One single ever - a rather bittersweet triumph, since the band was forced to use co-writers and a glossy pop producer at that stage in its career.

Drummer Bun E. Carlos explains, "It just illustrates the point of how out of hand things got in the



Eighties. Plus, Tom wasn't in the band for most of it. The record company was shoving songs down our throats. They said, 'your songs are no good, you gotta do this song and

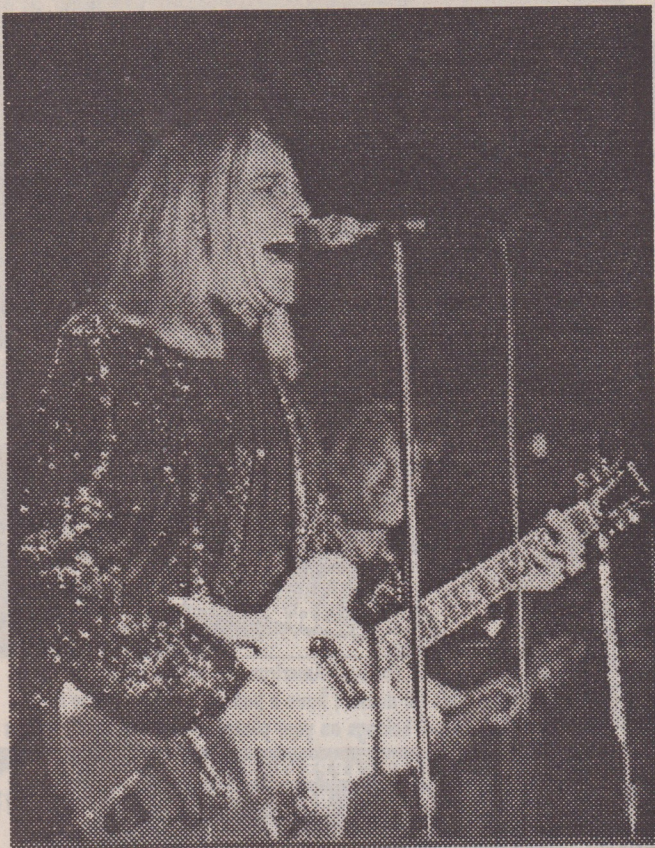
that song,' that kind of shit. For *The Doctor* and *Lap Of Luxury*, we were surrounded by people who were just not working for us or with us.... Management, Epic... they were all

working for themselves. We'd be on tour, get a tape of final mixes for a record. We'd say we didn't like it, they'd say it was too late. Everyone thought they knew best and no one gave a flying fuck what we thought. That's what happens."

I asked Carlos if that's why Cheap Trick ignores 99% of the songs from that era (from 1982's *One On One* through 1990's *Busted*) in their live shows today. Seeming a bit agitated, reflecting back, Bun E. continues, "It leaves a sour taste in our mouth when we hear some of that stuff, that a lot of good songs were ruined because of things out of our hands. Plus, Tom wasn't on those records, he wasn't into it. We relearn a couple now and then, play them a month or two and then drop them again."

Fast forward to 1997: On





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studio record for indie label Red Ant, Cheap Trick tours and does shows with Beck, Stone Temple Pilots, Mathew Sweet, the Muffs, Motley Crue, Smashing Pumpkins, and Lucious Jackson, as well as some Lollapalooza dates. The band refuses to be dumped onto the dinosaur rock circuit. Rick Neilsen proclaims, "Cheap Trick is the first record of the second half of our career."

I mention to Bun E. that the new self-titled CD fits in amazingly well with the current musical climate of rock. Bands have been covering Cheap Trick songs for years and many cite the band as a big influence on their music. Bun E. responds, "Fortunately, music has kind of come around to the way we sound anyway. Plus, we sound better these days too. *Cheap Shots* (the Cheap Trick tribute album) is coming out soon. We gave them some bands names of groups we'd like on it... none of those could make it. (laughs) I remember we told them, 'Bob Mould, Smashing Pumpkins, Nixons, Goo Goo Dolls.' New York Loose did a really cool version of 'I Want You To Want Me.' I've heard about four other tracks I thought were exceptional."

Cheap Trick also went into the studio with Steve Albini not too long ago, Bun E. notes. "We did a 7inch single for Sub Pop with him. 'Baby Talk' and 'Brontosaurus,' a Move cover. We also recorded a third song that we didn't use yet. It's the rawest, dirtiest thing we've ever put out. We love it," Bun E. says.

Cheap Trick have pulled it all back together, found all the right parts, and for the first time in 20 years, they are supporting a record without a heavy-handed record company or manager with ulterior motives undermining their efforts. They are more in control of their career than ever before. And they are still one of the greatest live bands to witness, whether it be in a club or a big festival. Whether they're playing a classic like "Auf Wiedersehen" or "Surrender" or a new gem like "Anytime" or "Wrong All Along," Cheap Trick remains an American rock institution. It's about time they get some true respect for their place in rock history and their overwhelming influence on bands like Nirvana, Foo Fighters, Everclear, Toadies, Tonic, and so many more.

Maybe it took Cheap Trick too long to get it right, maybe all the hype about a comeback is hot air. No one ever said the American public was smart or had good taste. All I know is that Cheap Trick's new record is the finest rock album in years. Robin Zander's voice is still the best in the business. From screams from the bowels of hell to the sweetest melodic ballads, his dynamic throat is an inspiration to singers everywhere. Before it's too late, discover or re-discover one of America's greatest natural resources — Cheap Trick.

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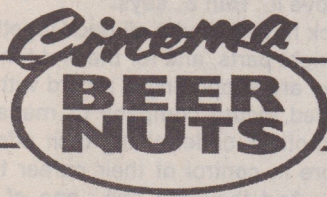
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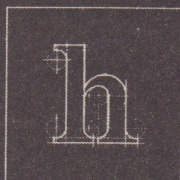
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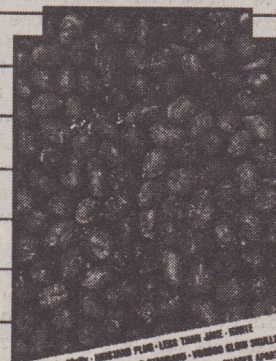
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Happy & Peppy & Bursting with Love

Interview & photos by Jim Testa

Remember that song that Felix Unger wrote on *The Odd Couple* for Jaye P. Morgan -- "Happy, Peppy, & Bursting With Love?" I think of it every time I hear Spredhaus.

Happy? You bet? Peppy. Unbelievably. And - just to cap off this dumb metaphor - bursting with love for what they're doing with their music.

The New Brunswick-based quartet recently released its first album, *Home Is Where The Haus Is*, and has been bringing its peppery blend of alternative rock, funk, and pop to clubs throughout New York and New Jersey.

Spredhaus started as a typical high-school garage band. "The three guys have been playing together forever and a day, all the way back to high school and then some," says Chris, who admits that early version of the band was pretty cheesy. "We were all marketing and no music at the time. Then we met Johanna at Rutgers because she was living in the same dorm as Joe and singing with some other band."

When both bands wound up appearing on the same bill at a Cook College Field Day, the guys asked Johanna to try singing with them. "They had gone through a bunch of different singers, and I was in a band doing cheesy covers," recalls Johanna. "So we played this Cook College Ag Field Day, my band using their equipment, and they heard me sing, and I guess they thought I had a lot of presence or something because they asked me to come to a rehearsal and try doing some songs with them."

"We hit it off from that first practice," says Felix. "Up to then, the three of us would spend all our time sitting in the basement, just playing covers or writing songs, drinking too much beer. We had all these songs that we thought were great, but none of us could sing them. So we got to the point where we were ready for anybody who could sing. But as soon as Johanna came along, everything changed."

The three guys already had a ton of music written, Johanna brought a bunch of lyrics with her, and together, they put together their first set of songs in record time. "We wound up with 6 or 7 songs, so we went down to Patti's (a New Brunswick pizza restaurant and bar) with an acoustic guitar and did a set. And the lady at Patti's thought we were great, and we had all our friends show up, and it went pretty good."

"We knew we weren't going to have much of a career playing



Patti's though," recalls Chris. "Especially after the owner there told us we were too loud and asked if we could turn the drums down." But shortly after their Patti's debut, the band got its first gig at New Brunswick's Melody Bar, and never stopped to look back.

"Our first Melody show was where we met Evelyn Forever, and that worked really well, and we've played with them a lot since then," adds Joe. "That did a lot to help us get established in New Brunswick."

The most unique element Spredhaus brings to the busy New Brunswick club scene is Johanna Staley herself, whose barely contained, hyper-bubbly persona makes every gig feel like a party. Then there's the interchangeable rhythm section, with Felix and Chris switching back and forth between drums and bass throughout the set.

"When we first starting playing, Chris was on drums and I was on bass, but then he wanted to try playing bass, so he taught me how to play the drums," explains Felix. "When I was in college, I was taking percussion my freshman year," adds Chris. "That was my easy way into college. But then I wanted to try strings so I switched then and started learning bass. I would come home from drum lessons and just reiterate to Felix how much I wanted to try playing bass. But it's worked out good, because now we can switch and it adds to our sound."

The question of who plays which instrument on what song goes back to how the song was written. "It really depends just on who was playing bass and who was playing drums when we wrote the song," explains Chris. All of the older songs, written before Johanna came along, had Felix on bass, whereas many of the newer songs have Chris on bass. "The older songs are our really poofy, super poppy songs anyway," says Felix. "We keep thinking of phasing it out but switching does seem to add a little novelty."

The thing is, it really doesn't matter who's on bass (or drums.) Watching the band perform, Chris and Felix seem equally adept at either instrument, perfectly complementing Joe's inventive, funk-based riffs and Johanna's melodic, theatrical vocals.

"Having Johanna in the band has made it so much easier to write songs too," adds Chris. "We know that even if we write something really simple, she'll be able to make it come alive. On the newer songs, she writes most of her own melodies, but we also know that if we write something with a standing groove, she'll be able to make it interesting."

"I have to admit, my background is very theatrical," Johanna notes. "In high school, I did a lot of musicals. My favorite was 'Little Shop Of Horrors.' I was one of the black girls who got to sing all the doo wop harmonies. And I sang a lot in choirs in church."

The thing is, watching Johanna perform, you have to wonder if all that perkiness ever gets on the rest of the band's nerves. "No, it doesn't," replies Felix. "But you have to understand, she's not that perky all the time." "I guess I'm a different person onstage," admits Johanna. "It's a different world up there. You're doing it for other people, not for yourself."

All that pizzazz has backfired at times, especially when the band's found itself on bills with younger punk bands. "We've played a couple of shows out in Pennsylvania where the crowd was all kids and they just didn't know what to make of us," says Johanna. "I'd be dancing around and going out in the audience and they'd just stare at me like I wasn't punk enough for them. I think that's why we do well in clubs. We appeal more to an older crowd - not older, but like 23, 24 and up. Even my mother digs our music."

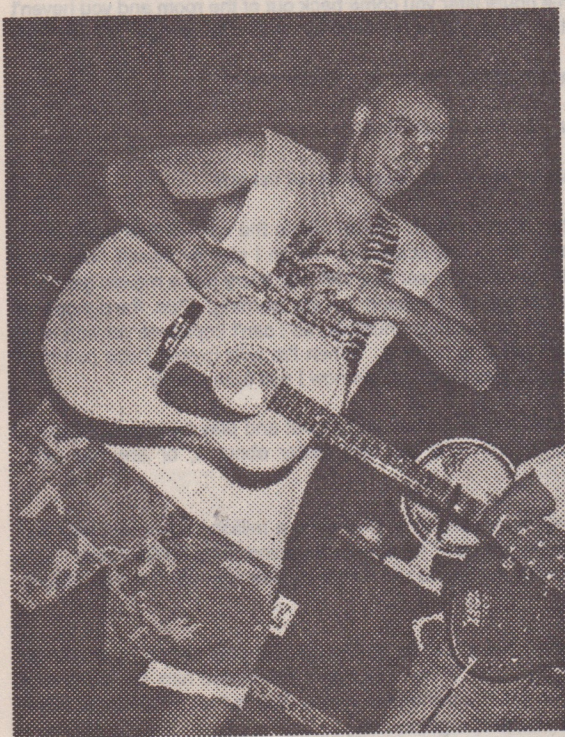
Although Spredhaus met at college, no one in the group has managed to get a diploma yet - a bit ironic for a band that's making its name in a college town like New Brunswick.

"New Brunswick has really been good for us. People like us and we've never had a bad show there," says Johanna. "Lately, with the record coming out, we've been worrying more about getting the shows and getting press and not worrying so much about writing songs, and that's hurt us a bit. But basically I'd say that we're just a band that likes to play. I never thought we'd get this far. Everything from here is just fun."

**"Basically,
we're just
a band that
likes to play.
I never
thought
we'd get
this far.**



**Everything
from here
is just
fun."**



Bern, Baby, Bern

Penetrating.
Political,
Emotional,
Comical,
Folk Punk

Interview & photos by Eva Silverman

There is a new genre of music that you may or may not have heard about. It's called "Folk-Punk" and is closely associated with Ani DiFranco, and more recently, Dan Bern. What is it about this new form of music, this penetrating, political, comical and emotional form of rock?

I have two words for you: Dan Bern. These two words, two syllables, seven letters, one singer packs such a strong punch that he will leave you like he left me, singing in my boots. His music - what some may call folk-punk or political humor - is an unstoppable barricade of power-driven, emotionally intense rock. Some call him the Gandhi of folk music; it fits. Dan Bern has that witty, extremely intelligent edge to him. His songwriting relays dozens of messages about Marilyn Monroe ("Marilyn Monroe shoulda married Henry Miller/If she did she might be alive") to Elvis ("the Day that Elvis died was like a mercy killing/ America breathed a sigh of relief") to Charles Manson ("Charles Manson's real name is Charles Kraut-meyer") to Tim McVeigh ("Look ma, they're gonna fry Tim McVeigh/ She said that nice guy that's been on the cover off all those magazines, why would they want to go do a thing like that"). Live and in action, he's quick to get a crowd singing along to "Aliens came and fucked the monkey/ they fucked the monkey," and encourages you to teach it to little kids around ten or twelve years old. I admire him for his strength to just get up on stage with a guitar and rock the place out to first time listeners, get them singing along, get their heart pounding. It's just incredible.

The first time I saw him was back in March of 1997 when he opened for Ani DiFranco. He was a riot. I couldn't get his songs out of my head for weeks and was impatiently waiting to see him again. I was lucky enough to be able to have a couple lengthy conversations with him. He has such a soft, calm, almost hypnotic voice that makes

you feel extremely comfortable talking to him about anything. I want to leave you thinking that he's got the biggest balls and emotionally powerful and political songs that will make you actually think about things. But I'll just say that you HAVE to see Dan Bern next time he rolls into town.

Q: Where do you get your ideas for songs? Some of them seem so random, where do you come up with them?

D: Well, I don't know. I get em from everything. I get em straight out of my life mostly. Stuff that happens to me, stuff I read. You know, it's like a collage in a way. It comes together and it can be total made up, based on real things, can be real things based on the stuff I make up. Its the whole schemer.

Q: It's pretty random.

D: Yeah, I mean, yeah. The trick is... how do you form it, it's not where it comes from. To me, it's like, what do you do with it? We all have access to the same information, it's just how you order it.

Q: Most music is completely real life in the sense that, "I'm telling this story, about this specific event that happened to me on this day." Your music is more... abstract for lack of a better word.

D: I do abstract, how so?

Q: Like say, connecting Tiger Woods to big balls, yet not in a direct way ("even though my balls are big/sometimes I wish they were bigger/big as the golden arches/big as the golden gate bridge/big as Mars and Jupiter/big as the swing of Tiger Woods.")

D: That's just my train of thought. But see, I don't think most people think linear. Most people they think... One thing will trigger a thought. But how do you get there, there is a logic to it. It's not just

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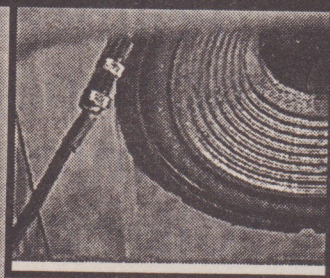
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Jan. 22nd at CBGB, NYC

always clear and direct. But too much of the time people will drop their own thoughts and get too ordered. People are crazy. Like, you'll decide that you're going to go to the next room to get something and three hours later you come back out of the room and you haven't gotten that thing, but you've done all these other things. It's like that.

Q: Who would you cite as your influences?

D: You. Her. Me. Everything.

Q: What do you usually base your set list on?

D: I start from scratch. Some nights the set will feel really solid, sometimes they'll feel scattered. When I play by myself I can do a really strong cohesive set and feel that every piece makes sense. I can't do that yet with the band, I'm still learning. Plus, the songs that we know are just a limited number, so I can't improvise yet with what song I am going to do next. When I'm with myself I can pull from 200 songs to play (literally), but now I pull from twenty.

Q: How different is it when you go out and play by yourself and not with your band? Do you feel better about it, or are you more nervous?

D: I'm just more used to it. I've done a million shows that way and I've done six this way. Of course it's going to be a little easier. The ground under my feet is still a little icy this way. But, it's exciting to me.

Q: Do you have a favorite environment to play shows in, you know like churches...or? (The night that I interviewed him, his show was at a church in Montclair and the show was put on by "Outpost in the Burbs" a volunteer organization.)

D: I guess my favorite places are... clubs that are packed. Any place that has the energy, if it's tiny or huge.

Q: What would you really like to get out to the people that listen to your music, as in message-wise?

D: Well, if I go to a show, I would like to be inspired. I hope that I inspire people, I guess that's pretty much it.

Q: You inspire me.

That's the first interview. I got to talk to Dan Bern again and here's what happened...

Q: Here we go again. I wanted something that went into more depth than the last one.

D: Well, I don't know if I got any depth in me today but we'll try.

Q: I wish I could have seen you guys a couple of more times (Dan plays with a drummer and a bassist). You're from Iowa right? What made you decide to pack it all up and head out to California?

D: Well, I went to Chicago first for a couple of years. I tried to play a lot and discovered there wasn't going to be a whole lot I was going to be able to do there. I kinda thought at the time, that I should go to New York or LA. I knew New York pretty good and I didn't know LA at all, so for some strange reason that's where I ended up for a while.

Q: You were a Tennis coach down there?

D: Yeah you know that was one of my jobs. I pretty much love all sports but that's the one I'm probably best at.

Q: What made you pick up a guitar for the first time?

D: Uh I guess it was... probably when I was about fifteen and I had some records. I just wanted to be able to play what they did. I felt like that was something that maybe I could do too.

Q: That's kinda strange cuz that's exactly how I began to play the guitar. That was going through my mind. I wanted to be able to make that music that I love so much.

D: Yeah, I mean I'd heard all kinds of other music before then. I think even though I have a band right now, there's a bunch of people that I play with now, my natural instincts most of the time tend to play more solitary. You hear somebody play something and sing something that they wrote themselves and not need a bunch of people, there's something empowering about that.

Q: Is there one experience that has had the most effect on your music?

D: I don't know. I think, in recent years just being on the road has



had a definite effect on my music. We changed some of my style. My life now compared to just two or three years ago is just so different. I've been living on the road for a couple years now.

Q: I've been asking a few people on America Online if they had any questions. The idea that you brought up, about how you are always touring, raised one of the questions that they asked. They wanted to know if you are going to be doing a live album because "we" think that it would capture the true essence of your music.

D: It's possible. I mean, right now, we're still finishing this Ani (DiFranco) produced album. I'm not really thinking about recording live shows. I'm mainly trying to get this live show the way that I want it. I'm not really thinking in terms of a live album. In the past I felt kinda not really in the favor of live albums. Because if you listen to

a live album the singer isn't singing to you, they're singing to somebody else, some other time and place. It's like you're listening to it secondhand almost. On the other hand, Ani's live album is really good listening to. So, never say never.

Q: I definitely know what you mean. I tape most of the shows that I go to. I mean, I have the Ani DiFranco live album (*Living In Clip*) and I also have the shows that I went to and that I have taped and I'd prefer those to *Living In Clip*.

D: Yeah, it's different if it's one that you were at. It's like reliving an experience that you had, versus listening in on something that you weren't a part of.

Q: I'm actually going to send Amanda (Bern's publicist) a package with all the tapes that I have of your live performances.

D: There's my live album.

Q: Unfortunately, all of them aren't great quality, but you can pick and choose. What is your favorite food?

D: Eggplant Parmesan.

Q: Really? Do you like a lot of Italian?

D: Yeah, I do.

Q: I wish that I could respond to everyone of your songs that I've ever heard Dan. I wish I had a whole day to just talk to you and give you comments on every one of your songs. But, since that's not really possible I just wanted to tell you that your song "Lithuania," what we (my dad and I) thought when you performed that. It was just phenomenal. Both of us had tears in our eyes, and I guess it reflected personal family history about the Holocaust and my Jewish background. It really struck us.

D: It's not a song I can do every night. It's hard for me to do as well. It's probably because it's really personal and emotional to me. And if I feel that it's the right time, then I'll do it.

Q: If you could spend a day with five people, who would they be?

D: John McEnroe. Bobby Fisher. Do they have to be living?

Q: No.

D: Woody Guthrie and Lightning Hopkins. They are all guys, so that's kinda boring, it wouldn't be a very good party. Lets see... Billie Holiday.

Q: That's ok though, I think I prefer the way that you approach it. Speaking of anthropology, how is your little dog Gidget (and her opposable thumb)?

D: From what I hear, she's fine.

Q: So, you really do have a little dog named Gidget?

D: Yeah I do. There was a dog that I shared with an ex girlfriend that now has it.

Q: What kinda dog was it?

D: A Lab mix. It makes me sad talkin about her.

Q: Aww I'm sorry. My little dog is starin' at me right now. Do you have a favorite song that you like to play?

D: "Pretty Boy Floyd."

Q: Where do you see yourself in ten years?

D: I have no idea.

Q: Do you think you'll be hitting the road, and touring?

D: Probably something like that. But you know something, I don't know. I'm doing this now, because I like doing this. I don't know if I will in five years, or ten years (tidbit: Dan tours so much that he actually has no permanent address). I'm comfortable with it and I'm doing it because I want to, it's fun. I could be doing this for thirty years or I could be doing this for two years. It's also a job. For all the driving and preparation, when I'm up on stage...that's my time to let it out. It's great.

Q: What was the first record that you ever bought?

D: *Abbey Road*.

Q: How about the first concert that you went to?

D: I suppose it was my dad's.

Q: I just have a couple more questions that are from a couple people online.. One of them is, since Ani is producing your next album, is it going to be released on Righteous Babe Records?

D: No.

Q: Is "Talkin Mrs. DiFranco Blues" (the song) going to be on that record?

D: Unfortunately not.

Q: Since a lot of people think you sound like Bob Dylan, do you feel especially influenced by him.

D: You know, for sure. But, no more than by anybody else. I mean, I never really thought about it very much. I've probably thought about it because a lot of people ask about it. If there is anything that is similar, it's probably with the writing. I don't think that my voice sounds a lot like his. I write about some of the same things in a different way.

Q: Well, that's all that I have for the official interview. But, thanks a lot, I completely appreciate it and I can't even begin to tell you how much you have influenced me in certain ways and given me 'food for thought' on certain issues. Your music is amazing..and just keep on doing it.

D: Well thank you, you're a real sweetie and it's great to see you at any show that you pop in at.

Q: Is it going to be a while before you come back here?.

D: Probably March, or early spring.

Q: Great! I'll be there.

And so should you.

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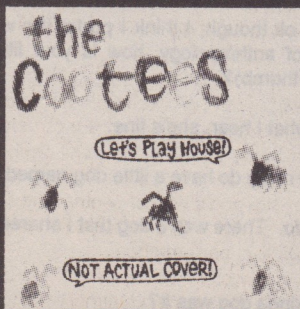
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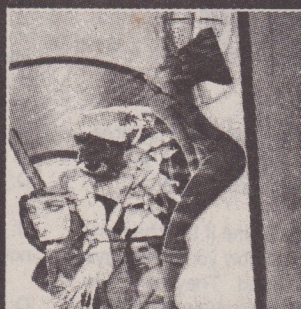
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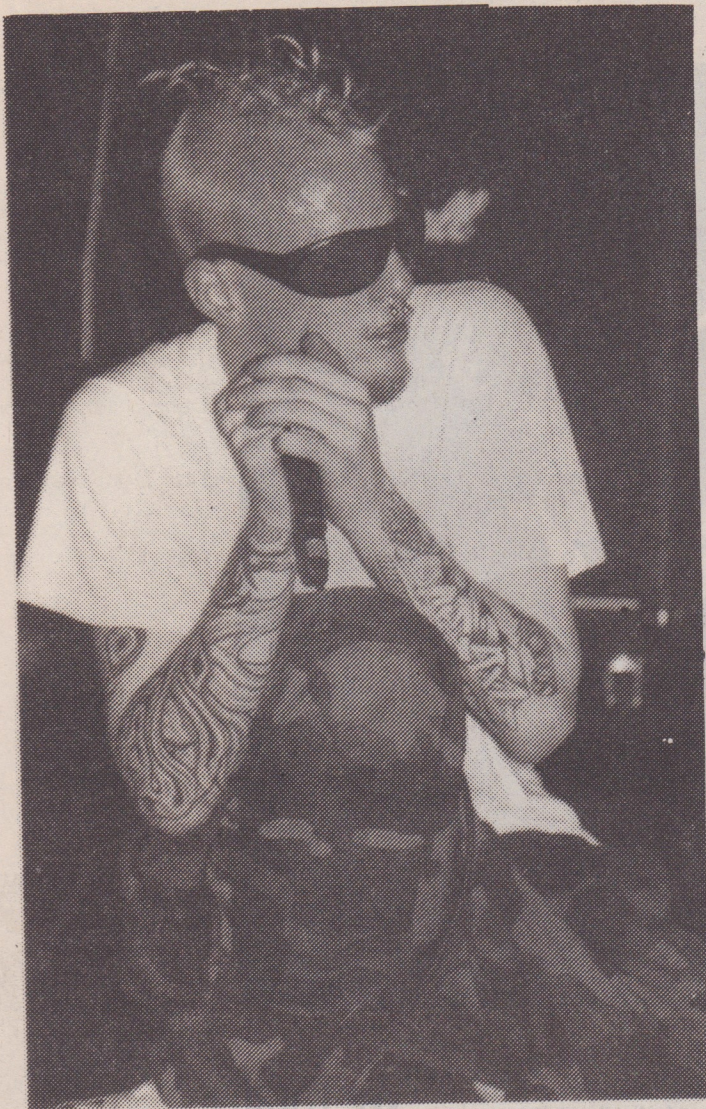
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stem

Interview by Joann Jovinelly
Photos by Jim Testa and Justin Borucki

Jay Ocean Stem - Vocals
Bob Skatagna - Guitar
Bill Keller - Bass
Edd Allen - Drums

With their acclaimed debut EP, "Forever Up" on Ignition Records, and a professionally produced and directed video for the single, "Pinch," the hard-edged, hip-hop peppered rock band Stem is racing toward major success - but they couldn't be more humble about it.

The group, who formed almost two years ago from several shore bands, came together when guitarist Skat merged with Bill and Edd, ex-members of Panface. When they met Jay, previously a drummer for Nudegroove, they knew they had found their vocalist. "Panface had just ended. Edd and I would hang around on week-ends jamming with Skat who was friends with Jay. The first time we heard him sing he just stood out. He *really* had style," said Bill.

Jay tried to explain his signature approach to vocals: "I use my voice as a percussion instrument. I had been writing poetry for years. The difference is now I try to percussionize my voice and it comes off in an emotional way," the 22-year-old vocalist and lyricist said. "There really aren't any rap bands that come across with a lyric that's *heavy* enough."

The delivery of the lyrics in many of the tracks is wrought with a passion comparable on the simplest level to a separatist's personal constitution. It is a spirited declaration charged with the speed of light and then converted to the audience, who become fueled in Stem's reality. In his own words, Jay explained that he wants to "bring the lyrics to another level, making the statements so angry that they're beautiful."

The lyric combinations are sophisticated, often accented with strong imagery and constructed using devices of prosody like alliteration or assonant rhyme scheming. "*On and on with my life shed phenomenon/ Standing through all I knew to who was wrong/ Then I stand there dare to tear/ Then I'd know I was the son of God,*" or "*Back and forth with my striptease of misery/ Don't even know if my luck will tragedy/ In my whore shack all alone/ Could I even loan you Earth's stone?*"

Many of the tracks share a musical urgency, combining subtle bass leads with a driving percussion and persistent, aggressive vocals. Tracks like "Smooth" and "Pinch" showcase the talents of guitarist Skat, while the phonetic vocal delivery on "Ground" promises an interesting future for Stem. It is obvious that Stem is influenced by hip-hop's flow of poetry. Although extremely well-produced, the six-track CD maintains an attractive raw sound that is similar to their live performance.

The initial connection with Ignition Records couldn't possibly read more like a fairy-tale, as Jay Ocean Stem literally sold the company on the band's demo tape almost instantly and only by sheer determination. "Jay has got a good mouth for business and he really makes people listen," said Bill. And listen they did. By day's end, all the 'big-shots,' as dubbed by the band, had demanded to hear Stem play live. "I'm always out there trying to talk with people, trying to make connections," Jay said.

The rest is, well, history. Chris Gibson, who did the production

for "Forever Up," joined forces with friend and video director Marcos Siega, who also directed productions for Civ and Quicksand, to develop a video for the single, "Pinch." Shot on a shoestring budget, and with an all volunteer crew, the video now runs on sixty or more cable stations across the country.

"The budget we had for the video just barely covered the equipment rental, but it looks totally professional. We were very happy with the outcome," said Bill.

The video, which was shot in a small loft space, exhibits a close tension between the band members, further exaggerated by a clever use of fish-eye perspective. A shallow sink filled with brightly colored blue water is used as a prop for Jay, who completely takes advantage of the opportunity. The water almost acts as a metaphor, the agony of a public baptism, delivering a small local band through the rites of passage into another realm. In short, it's a rather far-reaching achievement for Stem, and they are more than pleased with their accomplishments.

"Right now we're using the EP and the video as a springboard for our first full length album. But granted, we get anxious as hell, but that's when we have to step back and gain some perspective," said Bill.

Traveling to Los Angeles this past summer to promote their EP they participated in Foundations Forum (the most important national showcase for metal and hard rock,) where they were invited up on-stage to jam with the remaining members of Sublime for an audience of thousands. "We are selling records on the West Coast, so it was really exciting to be there. Much of the West Coast scene is very emotional," said Jay. "I think our sound has something in which people may relate. I think we're going to turn a lot of heads."

While the newer non-recorded tracks are heavier, Stem is excited to play them live, looking to their audience for approval. Two of these tracks, "Deficit" and a re-recorded version of "Ground" may be found on a new compilation titled *New York's Hardest*, which should be out by the time you're reading this.



"The new material is a little more dynamic, a little more structured. It still goes for the throat, but we are getting better at structuring ourselves. We have a clear direction," said Bill.

Stem is eminently connected with their home base, however. In addition to thanking some 40 bands - most of them local - on the inner jacket of their EP, they insist that New Jersey is flooded with bands that deserve to be signed to a label and claim that many of their successes are attributable to fate.

"We totally want to support the local scene. We would never run from it. We love playing here and want to help out as many bands as we can," said Bill.

"The Saint in Asbury Park is our stomping ground, we'll always play there," added Edd. "We don't have any of those hard luck stories that most bands have---We're not a soap opera."

"Everyone has been really supportive," said Bill, who added, "Can I put in a plug for the Allen family garage where we rehearse?"

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'We totally want to support the local scene. We would never run from it. We love playing here and want to help out as many bands as we can.'

The Happy Go Luckiest Angst Band In New York

By Jim Testa

James Pertusi - Bass, vocals
Jim Santo, Guitar, vocals
Eddie Siino, Drums, vocal
Lenny Zenith, Vocals, drums

If you live in the tri-state area, you'll probably recognize Jenifer Convertible as the name of a local manufacturer of fold-out beds - unless you're part of that small but fortunate fraternity that has also discovered Jenifer Convertible the band.

My association with the group came as a result of my enormous respect for JenCon guitarist Jim Santo's work as the writer behind *Demorandum*, the demo tape review column which used to run in *Alternative Press* magazine (it's since become known as Demo Universe with a new home on the World Wide Web.) Once, a few years ago, Jim casually mentioned that he played guitar in a band and invited me to a show. I went, checked them out, and suddenly I had two reasons to respect this guy.

Like so many New York City bands, Jenifer Convertible toils in relative obscurity, playing shitty gigs for no money in front of not enough people whenever they can. Earlier this year the quartet released its first CD, *Wanna Drag?* on Yum Records, only to watch the label slowly go out of business. To say they deserve better would be like saying that Michael Jordan deserves to be nominated for the NBA's Hall of Fame someday. In fact, they deserve to be rock stars - or at the very least, earning a living from their music, instead of working mindless day jobs and pouring every spare minute and dollar into keeping the band afloat.

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Lenny Zenith's voice could melt the heart of a I.R.S. auditor. Lenny - let's get this out of the way - used to be a woman. He is now a man. This is a fact, not a gimmick, so let's move on, okay? Jim Santo, like many large men, is as light on his feet as a ballerina. Watching him scamper and prance around on stage, oohing backup harmonies into the mic and taking the occasional lead vocal himself, is like watching a small child running amuck into a big pile of autumn leaves. That's something Santo shares with the rest of this band - a sense of joy in what they're doing that translates into the music and communicates itself to the audience. But let them tell you about it themselves...

Q: Who are you, where did you come from, why are you here?

Lenny: I'm from New Orleans. And I had been playing in a lot of bands there. I came up to New York to try playing my music in a different setting, and little by little, as my nice pop bands started to disintegrate and I started to become



Lenny

**jenifer
convertible**

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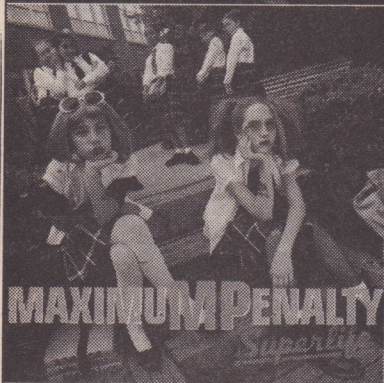
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infected with the New York noise - not the noise scene, but just the noise - I found that my music was taking on different aspects. I was starting to internalize aspects of living in New York. And so I wanted to change my approach, and I started looking for musicians who could bring out what I was hearing in my head. I was introduced to Jim by our old drummer, Andy Moore. Jim started out on bass but we figured out that he would be better on guitar, and so we got another bass player. We got hooked up with James through an ad in the Village Voice. Then our first drummer quit. Actually he was a junkie and we had to physically extricate him from the band. We cleaned him up one weekend so we could go in the studio and record, and he was swearing that he was clean, and then we found out he was on crystal meth during the session. So we got rid of him. And then our second drummer, Andy Moore, took off and moved to Maine.

James: That sounds bad. Andy did the right thing. Any one of us would have done the same thing given that opportunity.

Jim: Facing criminal charges. He needed to get out of state. (everybody laughs)

Lenny: So anyway, Andy left but fortunately for us, Eddy lived in Jim's building and knew him. And I saw him play in another band and was mesmerized by his forcefulness and his animalistic approach to music. Little did we know that he lived in Jim's building and so we asked him if he could help us with a few shows until we found a drummer, and the next thing we knew, he had quit his other band and he moved in. And we've kept him ever since. And we've just built our approach together from there, and it's become more of a collaborative effort than I ever imagined it could be.

Jim: I would really date this beginning of this band really to when Eddy joined, May of '95.

James: Hey, I have a bio that says it really started when I joined! Are you done? My name is James. I joined the band three years ago. I abandoned a career as an architect because this is fun and architecture is not.

Q: Don't architects make a lot of money, though?

James: No. This is a very common misconception. We are ranked in the public eye alongside doctors and lawyers but we don't dress as well and architects make very little money.

Q: Every time I interview a New York band, I wind up talking about how much it sucks to be a band in New York. There are too many bands here, the clubs won't pay you, the local newspapers and weeklies won't write about you. And the kind of music you play isn't particularly trendy at the moment. You seem to be surviving all that, why don't you talk a little about it?

Lenny: We were actually discussing this at our last rehearsal. Just about the time our first single came out, what we were doing was very cool and very popular. But because it took us two years to get our first album out, by that time boy guitar rock had started to fade for the fifth time in 25 years, so we were thinking of changing to a drums and bass, ambient kind of thing. But then we realized we weren't very good at that, so we decided to stick with what we do.

James: We have no rhythm.

Lenny: We have no rhythm or ambience. So we can't be an ambient band. But it is hard, because what we do is just play power pop songs, which goes in & out of fashion every three or five years. So we figure we're (to James,) what did you say we were again? We're so out we're in again.

James: We're in again. We're underground. Again.



Jim Santo

Jim: One thing that has made this much more pleasant is that we do have a patron in Rob at the Luna Lounge. He's one of our biggest fans and he's hugely supportive, and he gives us regular gigs on the weekends whenever we ask. And it's great, because when we play the Luna, we pack the joint and it's filled with people who appreciate what we do. And it's really allowed us to develop as a band in the public eye and let us develop a following.

James: What article was it that said there were at least 4200 bands for every borough in New York City? We just read that. So that's what we're up against.

Jim: Yes, but the vast majority of those other bands suck, whereas we are one of the few who are truly a great band. And I'm not even being arrogant, I'm just being fair to myself.

Lenny: It doesn't help that we're not as thin or as young or as drug-addicted as many of the bands in New York. But we're working on it. We're all trying to turn back the clock, and we've all joined gyms recently. But we just love what we do. And we're so committed to it that we rehearse quite a bit during the week, and we really believe in the songs that we do, and we're not going to change anything. Because we think it's good, and we know there are people out there who appreciate our songs.

James: If there's one thing we are, it's dedicated to doing this. Because we've all lost jobs and lovers and wives and girlfriends and parents to stay in this chickenshit outfit, and fuck 'em all, because we love it and we're going to keep doing it.

Lenny: Things are looking up. Now that we don't have a label, we're talking to a lot of people and we're weighing a lot of different offers. And we're getting a song on a TV show, some special about NASCAR NAPA racers is playing "Speed Racer." And we're getting some money out of that. So part of it we're going to use part of that to do some advertising, because our old label didn't advertise our record at all when it came out. And with the rest of it...

Jim: I think we're going to ring up (producer) Wharton Tiers and see if he's willing to go into the studio with us and record three or four new songs for a single or EP or something. Because we've got a lot of new stuff that's way better than anything on *Wanna Drag?*... not that *Wanna Drag?* is bad. But the new stuff is even better and we really want to get it on tape. So I think you'll see us doing a lot more recording in the near future.

Q: Jim, you've spent a large part of your life reviewing demo tapes and giving bands a chance to be heard, and some of those unknown bands have obviously gone on to great success. And yet here you are in a position where it's next to impossible to get your own band any press. Does that bother you at all?

Jim: No, it doesn't bother me. And we've gotten a lot of press, really. We haven't gotten any press for our album, which is frustrating, but that's mostly because we trusted our label to do the work for us. But now we're playing catch-up, so an album that was officially released in June is now going to be released in October, and we're going to start all over. But it doesn't bother me. What I do in writing about

other bands is hugely gratifying and I don't envy anyone else's success. I try to help people as much as I can, even though I can't review my own band.

Lenny: What a lot of people miss is that even though Jim reviews a lot of other bands - and he's very good at that, and very committed to it, and very rigorous about doing the best he can to help bands who are really a lot like us - but a lot of people don't realize that he is a great songwriter and guitarist and showman himself. So here's a guy who's putting it out there and very rarely saying, "oh, by the way, I happen to have a band of my own."

Jim: I don't play it up. I'll mention it in passing, because I can relate to the experience. But I've always been very sensitive about the perception that people are coming to see Jenifer Convertible because of what I do. But that's not really an issue.

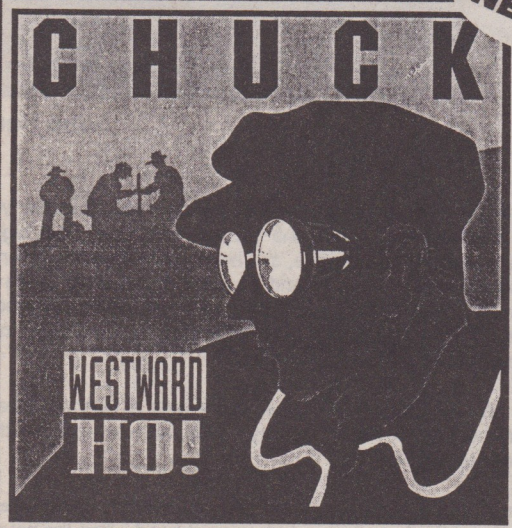
Q: How does the songwriting work?

Lenny: At first, I used to bring most of the songs in. But then the other guys all beat me up until I let them do their songs. No, really, they would bail me out if I couldn't come up with an idea. And little by little this band has become very collaborative. Now we write songs together. I might bring in an idea and by the time it's finished it's a completely different song that what I imagined. We've started to work so well together that it's almost frightening, because we're starting to wonder if we could ever work apart.

Jim: We're having a really, really creative period right now. Every time we get together, we end up with a song within an hour.

James: We're ready to take it to the next level.

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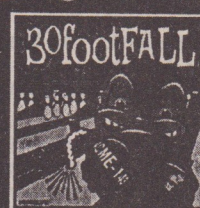
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(everybody laughs)

Lenny: James is invoking the words of a person who came down to one of our shows and kept saying "I think you guys are ready to take it to the next level."

James: He said it a lot. It started to get creepy.

Q: All my favorite songs on your album seem to be about cars ("Speed Racer," "The Car Song.") Is there a reason for that?

Jim: Pure coincidence. Although Lenny seems to be somewhat automotive obsessed.

Lenny: Well, it's not that, it's just that if you dream about vehicles or cars, or if you've ever dreamt about getting on the wrong subway or bus, it's a metaphor for what gets in your life, and where you're going, and how you get there. So that's what the songs are really about.

Q: People from around here know that Jenifer Convertible is a sofa store, but if they didn't know that, they might think it was a car. You know, a convertible.

Lenny: It's all tied in, and it's all about the anima - the drive to get somewhere, and what drives you, whether it's sex or whatever.

Jim: There's also a thread that runs through our songs that isn't noticed much, which has to do with childhood and the loss of innocence. I don't know why that is but there is a lot of imagery about little kids and stuff.

James: We're the happy-go-luckiest angst band in New York.

Jim: That's the funny thing about us. Our songs tend to be pretty sad, but we're such goofballs on stage that no one notices.

Lenny: Someone said to me once, 'your songs are so melancholy and so poignant but you guys goof off on stage so much, and you're so fun and easy going that the angst and the poignancy of your songs doesn't come across, because you don't take yourselves seriously enough, like an American Music Club or something. But I think some of those people take themselves too seriously, and one of the things that we've been able to do is take things that are really painful and write about them, and have a good time singing about them.

James: You get up on stage and you're singing about all this stuff that's bringing you down, and you're supposed to be exorcising demons. It's supposed to feel good. And if all it does is make you relive it all and get all upset, what's the point?

Lenny: I think that whenever we play, we're just so happy and grateful to be in each other's company, as corny as that sounds, and do something that we really enjoy doing, and that we've been doing for a long time... It's like we're just saying, wow, we get to play. And that makes up happy.

Q: You guys seem so well-adjusted....
(Hysterical laughter all around)

Q: ... okay, relatively speaking, you seem so comfortable with where you are right now, and so many younger people read Jersey Beat, I was wondering if you had any advice for them about what to expect out of being in a band and how to deal with how long it takes sometimes to get anywhere.

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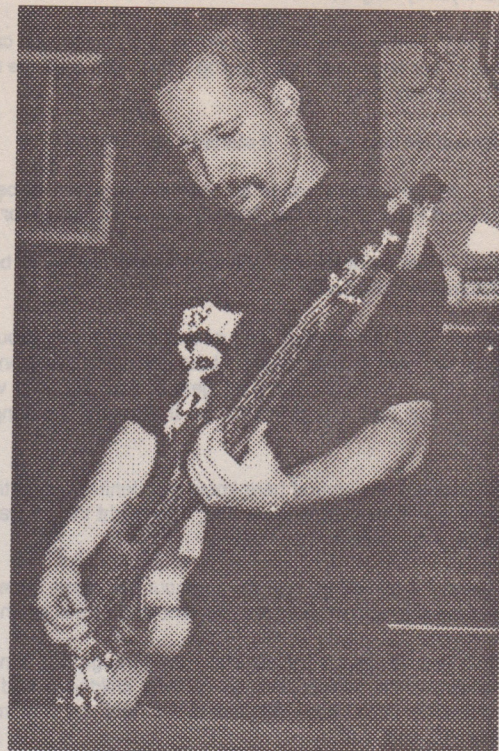
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Jim: Well, first off, let me say this. I heard this little segment on the news about making it in the music business the other night and they threw out this little statistic. According to the Recording Institute of America, 10,000 records were released last year, and only 7% charted in Billboard. That's charted. Not a big hit, just a little blip that showed up on a chart. Seven percent.

Lenny: I work in the music business peripherally, and I see what goes on with labels and publishing companies, and I think that as soon as people realize that you can't do this and count on making a living, unless you plan on being in a wedding band for the rest of your life. And if you do get a major label deal, then you have to realize that you basically have a year to enjoy yourself and live off the advance you've gotten. And then after that, the chances that you're going to do anything after that are so slim that you can pretty much just count on being a one-year wonder. And then it's over, and you have to figure out what you're going to do with the rest of your life. And if you love to play, then you have to make a decision. This is something we've talked about. We did not start this band to get signed, we started this band because we love to play, and that's why we're doing it. This is not some big career move. This is our lives.

Jim: For a young musician, getting signed is the Holy Grail. But after you've been at it for a while, you start to realize that once you get the Holy Grail, it's actually nothing but a soggy beer cup. And you'd better drink it fast, or the bottom's gonna fall out.

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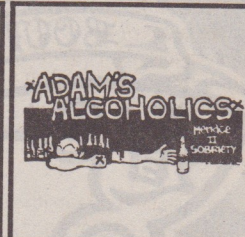
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Interview by Joann Jovinelly
Photos by Andy Peters & Jim Testa

by Joann Jovinelly

Guitar/ vocals - Chris Galen
Drums - George Morris
Bass/ vocals - Gay Elvis
Vocals - Mike Pimco

Suburbia breeds ingenuity. For proof, look no further than the Jersey Shore's own Kid With Man Head, whose over-the-top stage antics have made them one of the most popular and talked about bands in the area. The foursome, who returned this summer after an extensive 30-city tour across the West Coast and Canada, are back to do some dates at home and to promote their new CD on One Foot Records, *Flapjack Hairpiece*. After tracking them down to their home by the ocean, they spoke candidly about an approach to punk rock that frequently involves fewer clothes and falling appliances.

The fourteen track CD, a follow-up to *The Mr. Potatoe Head Chainsaw Masacre*, has taken the band toward a more

sophisticated sound, and one which will allow them to stride past any surf-punk stereo-type.

"It's a natural progression from our last CD," said vocalist and lyric writer Mike Pimco, who with the exception of four songs, has written all the lyrics for the new release. The material was recorded over the course of a year with a few tracks updated from earlier material. Already the subject of excellent reviews, *Flapjack Hairpiece* promises to be one of the year's most inviting efforts. With the consistently punchy drive of "You and Me," "Change the World," and "Beautiful" (which was also released on a 2-song EP from Super Cottonmouth Records titled "Mr. Happy,") this record has the charm and flexibility to get tremendous radio airplay. The seven-inch is also backed by a cut that you may have recently heard on the radio, the ever-strategic cover song, "Hotel California." For anyone that has ever been truly disgusted by the long-term viability of this classic Eagles track, well, it finally got a much needed face-lift.

Chris Galen's guitar is distinctive and

provides a layered effect, especially when combined with sometimes strenuous vocal backing. Some of these songs present themselves as humorous portrayals of love, offering a more cynical viewpoint, yet never too stunted by sentimentality. Others offer humor in general, like "Cheese Grate Your Face," which was continually requested during a recent live performance. They really let their aggressions fly into three hidden untitled tracks; short and matter-of-fact, they are a continuation of the unexpected flavor that is KWMH.

All in all, the compositions reflect a territory familiar to everyone, offering tokens of pleasure yet still delivering an edge that demands attention.

However the band, like any other, has not existed without obstacle. Even after a strong self-produced debut CD in 1996, and airplay on local stations, their bass player suddenly quit. "It was a fundamental moment," said Pimco, "I was thinking of quitting myself." Enter the charismatic Gay Elvis, or G.E., who after answering an ad in *The Aquarian* seemed like a matching piece to the puzzle that is KWMH.



andy peters photo



andy peters photo

"We all have a unique relationship. Even though G.E. joined after we began, we all have a lot in common," continued Pimco.

KWMH emblazoned G.E.'s admission into the band earlier this summer during their trek through the United States and Canada, where they were welcomed by innumerable young fans, playing a show almost every night for five weeks. As an opening band for such names as Offspring, Pennywise, Down-By-Law, and Shades Apart, they launched a much larger fan base. They collectively described Canada as a place where the kids are appreciative to many different genres of music, and express a great deal of enthusiasm for independent bands.

"One of the coolest things I saw was a person with a Kid With Man Head sweatshirt on that they had made themselves," Galen said.

"Touring is the ultimate adventure in exploration. It is absolutely no sacrifice," explained Pimco before elaborating that they sometimes slept on garage floors and in cars. Through it all they even managed to compose a new song entitled, "Blue Sky." Tour highlights included surfing in Hunting-

on Beach, CA, tic-tac-toe against a chicken in Monterey, gaming it up in Seattle, and difficulty crossing the border into Canada. "When they asked us to declare our merchandise we sort of underestimated. They (Canadian Authorities) decided to count our cassette tapes. We had 8,000 of them," laughs Pimco.

When asked about the local scene they explained that they would like to see more of a sense of common ground between bands, more support for one another. "I'm going to have to give the (local) scene the big thumbs-down. There just isn't enough camaraderie," GE said.

"We tend to see better attendance at shows when we go out of the country. It's refreshing to get out of this area," Pimco said.

Nonetheless, the Jersey Shore area has been good to KWMH. The band won several trophies at the 1996 Asbury Park Music Awards, including "Best Local Release," and "Best Live Performance." This past June at the '97 Awards show, Gay Elvis won an award for "Top Bassist" while audiences buzzed with anticipation knowing KWMH were on the bill.

A rich past presents itself if you give mere mention to another institution for which KWMH are known: shock value. Whether it's by hanging upside down during a show, cross-dressing, donning fruit, panty-hose, or practically nothing, KWMH have been there, done that.

"It is really all about the music," explained drummer George Morris, "but after you drill the music for months and months and it's hammering, then we can do basically whatever we want. Even if we make



the performance a combination of a visual and musical presentation, the music is *always* the first thing."

KWMH have a need to entertain that goes beyond the band, which had its earliest formation while they were close friends still in high school.

"We were so bored growing-up in Middletown that we used to drive my friend's station wagon around looking for old appliances like dishwashers. We would load them up in the back of the wagon—old television sets—the best was an old toilet...We would speed down the street, maybe in front of someone's house that we knew, and kick whatever appliance it was out of the rear of the car. It would smash in the street and roll and there would be sparks flying everywhere, with it finally breaking into pieces. It was the most entertaining thing to us at the time. We did it again and again," Pimco said.

He continued with a nearly self-censored account about the boyish utility of quickie exposure. "There was always a lot of nudity," claims Galen. KWMH's most outrageous stunt this year had Pimco hanging from a ten-foot wooden trellis while performing clad in sheer hose, sans clothing, at the Asbury Music Awards show. Other band members stuffed small egg-like helium balloons into hose, creating alien headaddresses. When asked about the evening, band members agree that Pimco is the main motivating force behind the

stunts, but they eagerly go along, laughing all the way. Pimco, who described himself as a "philosophizing circus performer who wishes he was a magician," seemed like he was musing about the next chance to perform as we spoke.

"I feel like some (people) don't get it at all—they just don't see the fun in it, or the excitement. It just reflexes or extends our attitudes. They want someone very serious on-stage telling them what they should be doing with their life. When someone goes on-stage and just has fun, some people just don't understand that," Morris said.

KWMH are having fun, and seeing them perform live is a testament to the four individualists who are not afraid to go out on a limb in the name of having a good time. Hearing them pound song after song from their new CD, *Flapjack Hairpiece*, I began to realize that there was another element that they were tapping into while seizing their audience: participation. Although most bands expect the somewhat obligatory end reaction to a performance, KWMH pushes their audience further, literally to the point of exploitation. There is no harm done, however, as most audiences members seem to enjoy the attention. Instead of a straight give and take, the set becomes more of a communal experience.

"The only negative thing about adding another dimension to the show like this is that we don't always do it. Sometimes peo-

ple get let down if we don't do it. Everyone always wants to know how we are going to 'top ourselves'," Pimco said. And almost before he could finish the thought, Gay Elvis jumped on that lead: "Put it like this, next year, (during the Asbury Music Awards) we're going to actually give each other sex-change operations on-stage within the three song set, and then change back." He may be relatively new to the band, but he's certainly not a stranger to the ideas running amuck within the world of KWMH.

Don't let these pranksters fool you, though; they are about as enterprising as serial killers before their major made-for-television breakthrough. With two full-length releases under their belt, and two successful tours, they are thinking ahead to getting back in the studio with new material. KWMH are proof that persistence pays as well as careful planning. In it for the long haul, they magically make all their hard work appear effortless, and although the party has been a successful one, they are really only in it for the friendship.

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the promise ring



Interview by Howie Kutner
Photos by Shawn Scallen

The Promise Ring

Jason Gnewikow - guitar
Daniel J. Didier - drums
Tim Burton - bass
Davey Von Bohlen - vocals,
guitar

There wasn't much to rave about in 1997, but when we heard the Promise Ring's *Nothing Feels Good* on Jade Tree Records for the first time, we were excited. From the opening chords of "Is This Thing On," the album delivers a non-stop sonic assault that's like a pure shot of adrenalin injected straight into the smile center of your brain. So when the band came to Hoboken on tour, I was psyched to get to meet them. Then I got sick and missed the show - by all reports, about the best damn night at Maxwells all year. Luckily, Jersey Beater Howie Kutner had recently moved to Seattle, and we got him to corral the guys when their tour reached the Left Coast. Unfortunately, Howie couldn't transcribe the tape himself, and there was no way for me to figure out who was speaking at any given time. Still there's more than enough personality, intelligence, and sincerity here to go around. So meet Milwaukee's favorite sons, and one of our favorite bands - the Promise Ring. - *Jim Testa*

Q: So, you're from Milwaukee. Is there much of a scene there?

PR: We have bigger shows in Milwaukee than we have anywhere else but that's not to say we have a really great scene. But we're very fortunate to have high attendance at our shows.

I think it's pretty all right.

It's a big hang out scene. It's not really punk rock at all. There are a lot of rock bands but most of them are older, so it's a big Over 21 crowd. More like indie rock.

Very college-ish. A lot of college kids come out to shows.

Punk rock isn't very big in Milwaukee.

Q: Were you guys weaned on punk rock?

PR: Oh yeah. All of us were raised on punk.

Q: How old are you guys?

PR: Davey and Dan are 22, Jason is 23, and Tim is 24.

Q: Speaking of Milwaukee, would you rather live in a big city like LA?

PR: It would be fun.

Not for this band though.

Yeah, it would be fun but we wouldn't move to better the band or anything.

Q: What do you like about Milwaukee?

PR: When we're not on tour, it's nice to be able to go home to someplace that's all mellow and not be all stressed out. And also, I think a lot of bands that are East Coast get diluted in the industry part of it. If you're a band in New York or L.A. and you're doing well,

I think the idea
of living off
your music is
an amazing thing,
but I don't think
it necessarily
has anything to do
with a major label.
Right now,
what we're doing
is awesome.

automatically you're bombarded by the industry. Like Texas Is The Reason. They twist your view of the whole thing. When you come back to Milwaukee, there are no industry people.

We tour enough that we get to see what goes on in other places, but we don't have to live it.

We get to see the other side of it, but we live in reality. When we come home, we're just another band. It's nice, I think. It keeps you in a good perspective and mindset. It keeps you focused on what you're doing, instead of wondering what people are saying about you, which is nice.

Q: When you tour to someplace like New York, are you starting to get a lot of attention from people in the industry? A&R guys from major labels and so forth?

PR: Yeah, I think so. Not too many have actually approached us. That's a thing we hear a lot about after the show.

Q: Like, so-and-so was in the audience tonight?

PR: Yeah, right. But I think they kind of figure out that we're at the point where we don't really need a major label right now.

Q: You're pretty happy with Jade Tree?

PR: Yeah, I think that's it. We're pretty happy where we are and they can see that. Or maybe they just don't like us, who knows?

Q: So you guys are pretty much into the indie thing?



PR: I think the idea of living off your music is an amazing thing, but I don't think it necessarily has anything to do with a major label. Right now, what we're doing is awesome.

You can [earn a living] on an indie label. There are enough good indie labels around today that if you put out good records and tour, you can earn live just doing that.

It would be silly for us to go to a major now. If it becomes an issue later, then we'll deal with it. But right now it really doesn't have anything to do with us.

Q: How did you get hooked up with Jade Tree?

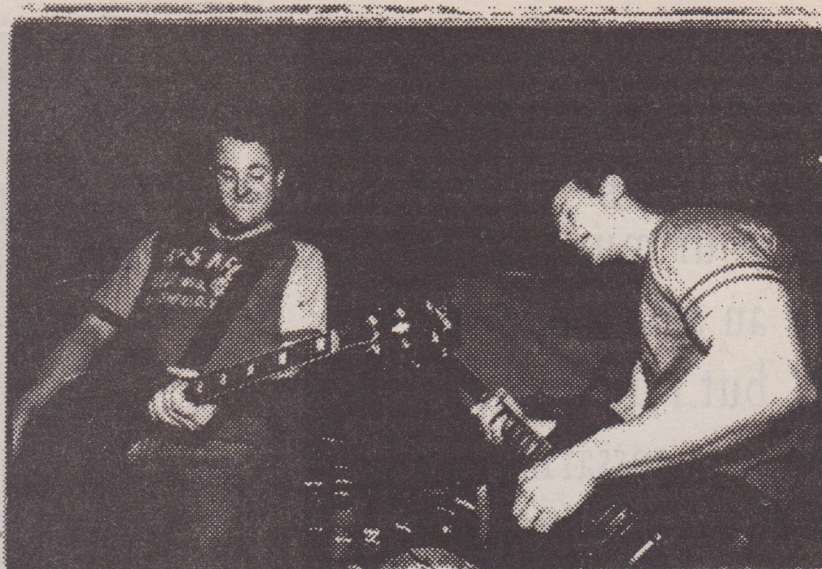
PR: Norm (Arenas, formerly of Texas Is The Reason) was living with Tim Owen (owner of Jade Tree) at the time, and we had played some shows with Texas. So we just started talking to Norm and then, we had already recorded a 7 inch without having anybody to really put it out. So I told Norm I'd send him a tape of it, and he gave the tape to Tim. That was how our first 7 inch on Jade Tree came out.

Tim heard the tape and he called me up and he asked if we'd let him put it out, and we were just like, "yeah." It was pretty easy.

Q: Since Milwaukee is the brewery capital of the country, and they make so much beer there, I was wondering if there was a big straightedge scene there, kind of in reaction to that?

PR: Yeah, there is a big straightedge scene there. It's not what it used to be. And we're not really into it anymore. I think four years ago, I would have known everybody at a straightedge show. Today I wouldn't know anybody.

People are going to call you what they want. We're four young people in our early twenties playing independent pop-rock music.



I think it's waning, really. I think there's more of a rave scene in Milwaukee. What happened with a lot of the straightedge kids is they went from straightedge to graffiti to the rave scene.

Q: So they just kept the baggy pants and changed the kind of music they listen to?

PR: Yeah, exactly. All scenes fluctuate.

Q: I was trying to see if with all the breweries in Milwaukee, if there was any connection.

PR: I've never really connected the two. It's not like in Milwaukee you're any more totally bombarded by beer than you are anywhere else. In the blue collar, residential areas, there's probably a pretty high bar to people ratio, but I don't think it's anymore ridiculous than any other blue collar city.

I think that's funny because I don't even notice it. It's so weird that our city is known for beer, because I don't see it. We're a dairy state, but we make less dairy than California. It's just an identity. Like, we're in Seattle now. So here they say it rains all the time. We're from Milwaukee, so we make a lot of cheese and drink a lot of beer. It doesn't really mean anything.

Yeah, it probably rains more in Milwaukee than it does in Seattle. It might even rain more. But Seattle is the rainy city. And everybody in Colorado skis. It doesn't mean anything.

Q: I wanted to ask about the lyrics to your songs, which are kinda weird and abstract. What's your inspiration there?

PR: It's just like writing poems. They're just littler, more restrictive poems. A lot of times they're random thoughts. The lyrics of our band, I don't think any of us feel a compulsion to take a stand on anything. It's just images and ideas.

Q: It's like painting a picture.

PR: Yeah, that's what we're trying to do. It's one of those things...

poets have their own styles. It's just like being right or left handed, it's just your own style. It occurs to you to write this way, just like it occurs to you to like football and not baseball.

Q: There seems to be a recurring theme in your songs that has to do with colors.

PR: I think colors are something that definitely you have to consider in music. If you take the time to establish in every point - the lyrics, the music, how the music and lyrics relate to one another, the peaks and valleys in the music and lyrics - and if you really accommodate all that stuff, then whether or not the person appreciates all that, they'll get it. They might not realize, oh, it's all coming together like this, but what makes a good song is *you* realizing that. So we take that into consideration, whether the person listening realizes it or not. You have to establish a certain mood. And you establish it with everything. Even with how you interact with the crowd on stage is totally important to how the songs go. You just consider everything at once. And colors is just one of those things.

Q: What have been some of your big influences musically?

PR: Belle And Sebastian had a big influence over us this year. As soon as we heard that second album, it just kind of washed over us.

Q: What's been playing in the tape player in the van on this tour?

PR: Oh, just everything. We're four very different people. The way it works is that when you drive, you get to decide what we listen to. So it can be anything from, like, pop to power metal, from R.E.M. to Art Garfunkle to Pet Sounds.

Q: I've read interviews with you before and one of the things you've sounded off on is the fact that a lot of the kids into punk today tend to be pretty narrow minded about what they will and won't listen to. It sounds like you guys listen to a lot of different stuff.

PR: Totally. There are a million good bands in every genre if you're into it.

Q: How do you feel about being tagged as 'emo'?

PR: The only thing that's annoying about it is that it's a ridiculous thing for anybody to be called. But it's got different meanings depending on who's saying it. Like the industry has their version of emo, which is like us or Jimmy Eat World. But when you're talking to someone in the punk scene, it's just scream-o-core. It's just not something for us. People are going to call you what they want. We're four young people in our early twenties playing independent pop-rock music.

I think the smartest thing anyone has ever done with that is "File Under Easy Listening," that Sugar record. Bob Mould was pretty smart with that. I work in a record store and people are always coming up to the counter with it saying "this isn't really easy listening, is it?" And I'm just like, "no."

People want to talk about music and they want to describe it in a brief way, so they come up with these tags. But that's such a silly name. If you say a band is hardcore, you get a picture. But with a name like emo, it could be like Heroin or it could be us or it could be the guy on the street leaning over his acoustic guitar all gloomy. I mean, that's pretty "emo."

Q: What do you think of all those emo bands that tend to be really mooney and depressed. Do you like a lot of that?

PR: There are so few good bands that come from the punk scene, I think. Or at least so few bands that I'm interested in. It might just be that once you start to play a certain kind of music, you don't really listen to it anymore. There are bands, obviously, that I like, but they're few and far between. The thing is, you don't have to be good to be popular in punk rock. People have a really low level of quality.

That's true everywhere, there's no quality control anywhere.

Well, I think that's more true in punk rock. Even if you were to take some indie rock band, you might not like their music but at least they'd be trying to write songs and be original. But in punk rock, you get so many bands that don't even try to be good, they don't care about their music.

You just don't appreciate what the punk rock scene is doing musically. But a lot of people do, and that's great. And if that's what you're interested in, then just interest yourself in that and be happy. Interest yourself in what you want to be interested in. That's what we do. Because we're so immersed in the punk scene, people assume that all we listen to is punk, but that's not what we're interested in.

Davey said it best when he said that he hates the sound of guitars. We're around it so much, I don't want to listen to that again. I listened to that on our first tour. I listened to that in my first band. You have to grow. You can't be so narrow minded.

The thing is that it doesn't interest us because we're around it so much. There are kids just getting into punk who find it all really exciting, just like it exciting for us when we first got into it. And that's great. But just don't make me try to appreciate it anymore, because there are other interesting things in the world. It doesn't challenge us because we do it. We've dissected a large portion of what it is to play two guitars, bass, and drums standard rock songs. The big savior on this last album for us was we started using a keyboard. It's amazing to think that there's so much you can do with a keyboard. That's totally challenging to us because we have nothing to do with that, it's all new to us. Or it's not - when you hear another rock band that's on our level, that's not challenging, and they probably aren't challenged to hear us. You listen to different styles because it just wouldn't be interesting otherwise. That's probably why we don't have much interest in punk anymore, the biggest part of it is that it just isn't interesting to listen to things that are like you.

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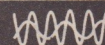
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Q: Are there any bands who are peers of yours that you do enjoy playing with?

PR: There are lots of good bands we play with, it's not that we don't like playing with all these bands. It's just that it's a lot harder to appreciate. Like a Jimmy Eat World is head and shoulders above every other band in that genre and we can appreciate it. It's very obvious. When you see a lot of something...

When you see a lot of something, what happens is that the great becomes good and the mediocre becomes horrible.

Because it's so easy to be mediocre. But I think Jimmy Eat World is the one band we're lumped in with that we definitely can appreciate the most. I respect our friends just for being our friends, but Jimmy Eat World is a band we respect just for being a good band.

Q: Let's talk about touring a little. Is California a popular place for you guys?

PR: We don't really know. We've only been there twice, and the first time was disastrous, it was horrible. And then we were with Texas Is The Reason last time and it was good. Touring with them was great but we never really knew if it was their draw or our draw or both. So this time, by ourselves, it's been... the East Coast was amazing. Some of the shows were bigger than when we were with Texas.

Q: Is that kind of weird to roll into a town and all these people show up to see you?

PR: Totally. It's really weird. But it's a good weird.

That's awesome. But there's also the feeling when you pull into some place in Montana and there's like seven people there and you're nervous, because it's a Monday night and you're wondering who the heck is coming to the show. There are shows like that, where you show up and you think nobody's going to be there.

Q: What do you think of the fans that show up? Because you guys play this really happy, upbeat music, but a lot of times now these kids come to the shows with their backpacks and they just sit there and don't move.

PR: It's funny. A lot of times people do get into it and sing along and whatever. And other times, they just stand there.

It depends on where you play. That's totally a city by city thing. If you play a city where everyone's tight and everybody knows each other, people get into it a lot more. But if you're at a big show and you just know the two people next to you, you're going to be a lot more self conscious in a room full of strangers.

Yeah, I think that's more a scene by scene thing than a band by band thing. A lot of times it will just depend on what the weather was like all day or what kind of mood people are in.

Q: Do you see yourselves doing this for a long time yet? Are you having a lot of fun?

PR: We're having a lot of fun, and we've taken this so much further than we ever expected to, that we don't think about the future. I can't imagine myself without this band, and I think that says right there that, yeah, we'll be together for a while. But at the same time, I think we're all much more than this band too. So it's not a grave issue. This band has been so good to us, and it's awesome, but when we decide it's finished, I hope it will be finished and that will be it.

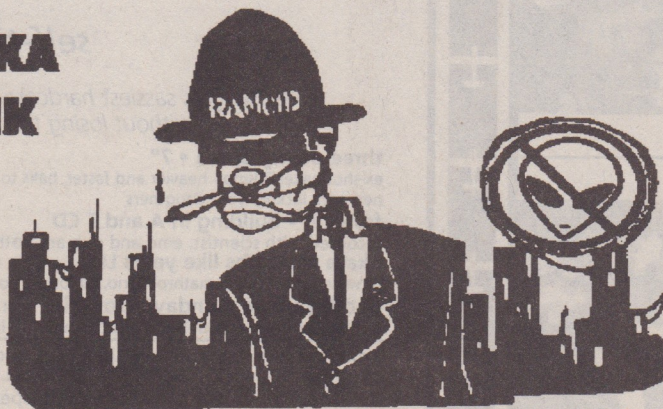
I wouldn't want to stay in the band if we just kept doing what we're doing now for 10 years. But there are bands like R.E.M. that stay together for a long time because they mutate and change.

I'm excited for our own mutations. I can't wait. That's the one thing I'm really looking forward to, seeing where we go and how and change.

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Greg, circa 1991 Photo by Toni Lieggi



Greg Attonito - Vocals

Pete Steinkept - Guitar, vocals

Bryan "Papillon" Kienlen - Bass, vocals

Shal Khichi - Drums

Considering that the Bouncing Souls are arguably the most popular, well-traveled, and entertaining punk rockers ever to come out of New Jersey, it's amazing how much they used to suck.

Don't ask me though, just ask the band. Back in 1992, when *Jersey Beat* included the 'Souls in an article entitled "Invasion of the Generic Funk Weenies," the guys were understandably upset, but today, they just laugh about it. "What can we say, you were right," says bassist Bryan Kienlen. "We did suck back then."

It's unlikely that no more than a few Bouncing Souls fans know how just long these guys have been around, or what they were like when they started. "Most people think our first album was (1995's) *The Good, The Bad, & The Argyle*, says Brian. "There aren't too many fans from the early days who are still around. They're all either dead or in jail."

The story starts back around 1987, when the 'Souls were still suburban high school kids and weren't a punk band at all; they were - or at least tried to be - a funk band. They took their shirts off and bounced up and down a lot, just like the Red Hot Chili Peppers, but the similarities pretty much ended there. "The problem was we

Bouncing Souls: Punk As Funk

couldn't really play our instruments very well," admits Brian. "We had a lot of fun but I don't know how anybody listened to us back then."

It was slow going at first, but things began to pick up in the early Nineties when the band moved to New Brunswick and started hosting basement shows at their house on Welton Street. Trenton's City Gardens - for years the premiere venue for alternative and punk bands in South Jersey - started featuring the Souls on a regular basis as well, exposing them to a thousand kids at a single show. Slowly but surely, they dropped the funk weenie crap and started writing punk rock songs. Greg - who, like the rest of the band, used to perform barechested all the time - started showing up on stage in a suit and tie. By the early Nineties, they were unarguably one of - if not *the* - most popular punk bands in the state.

Then they hit the road. "The thing was, we all basically became homeless and we didn't have anywhere to sleep anyway," says Brian. "So we just kept touring. As long as we were on the road, there was always somebody who'd let us sleep on their floor. And that was better than being home and having no place to sleep at all." By their own count, they've toured across the U.S. 18 or 19 times. "It got to the point there where we'd pull into a town and the kids would say, what are you doing here again? You were just here!" laughs Pete.

The Good, The Bad & The Argyle in 1995, their first record for

BOUNCING SOULS

BYO, marked the Bouncing Souls' arrival as a national presence on the punk scene. Eventually, word of the band's energetic live show, vastly improved songwriting, and indefatigable touring reached Epitaph's Brett Gurewitz, who talked the Souls into signing last Spring. The band's first Epitaph release was released in October.

I'm not kidding when I say that I used to hate the Bouncing Souls. But over the years, they've won me over. They make look like four goofy fuckups without a thought in their heads, but I've never seen a band work harder, tour harder, or put more of themselves into their music. I've never known any four people who were more punk rock either, and I mean that as the highest compliment. They may call the Lower East Side home these days, but they're still pure Jersey to me, and I'm proud to be able to call them my friends.

It took a little doing to get them all together, but as soon as I offered to meet at a bar and buy the first round, everything fell into place. This interview took place in late September at the infamous Holiday Cocktail Lounge, celebrated in song and about as skanky a dive as you'll find on the Lower East Side. Bryan, Pete, and Shal showed up first. Greg joined us a little later.

Q: I wanted to talk a little about the early days. Very few of the interviews I've read don't really go back very far.

Bryan: Yeah, it's true. We have demos from... geez, we wrote our first song in 1987.

Pete: That's why on the sleeve of the new record, there's that butterfly on it. And the butterfly has 87 on it. Maybe some people will figure out we go back that far.

Bryan: There's stuff out there. It's bad, but it's out there. We're not gonna name names of records but we did them.

Greg: We taught ourselves how to play by doing all those cover songs. Maybe we were bad but we believed in what we were doing. We just couldn't do it very well.

Q: Was there a turning point when you figured out the funk thing was a dead end and you decided to try a different direction, or was it just a slow evolution from one to the other?

Greg: No, we always just wrote the tunes as they came and they just fell into place as the times changed. We wrote *Joe Lies* and it kind of evolved after that into what we are now.

Bryan: Even when we wrote stuff with funk in it, it was evolving. We were into funk as musicians, so we tried playing it.

Shal: It was something to be excited about.

Bryan: We were excited about the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Fishbone. We were more excited about Fishbone than anything in those days, so we tried to be like them. But the result was bad funky ska. And funk and ska shouldn't mix. And hardcore shouldn't mix with funk and ska. And hardcore and funk shouldn't mix.

Pete: And punk and ska shouldn't mix.

Bryan: Yeah, punk and ska *definitely* shouldn't mix.

Shal: We were never thinking, oh, we want to make it, let's be a funk band. We'll make it being a funk band. That wasn't it. It was just like, hey, this is cool, it sounds cool. Let's try and be cool and play like this.

Pete: Our growing pains.

Bryan: It was more like learning to play our instruments.

Q: (to Bryan) Well, you couldn't have been too bad. You can't be a bad bass player in a funk band.

Bryan: I was. (laughs) But I learned some shit. We had soul.



Photo by Shawn Scallen

Q: You guys must have been pretty young then too. What were you, 16 or 17?

Bryan: Ten years ago? 17. Shal was 16. The thing was, people didn't know what to do with us. People liked us but they didn't know where to put us. We always wound up playing ska shows. We'd play one song ska song and then a lot of songs that went into ska. So we'd always wind up playing ska shows or funk nights. And when we started playing New York in '90 or '91, every show we got was a funk show. So it wasn't long before we decided 'this sucks!' and we wanted out of that scene. It was weird back then, it was all these skinheads getting into funk. It was demented.

Q: Well, you have to remember, CBGB stopped the hardcore matinees at the end of 1989. And the skinheads didn't go to ABC No Rio because they weren't allow to fight there, so the only place they had to go was the ska and funk shows.

Bryan: That's true. That's what we were all into. That summer, '89, all we listened to was that Op Ivy record, and the Toasters were really good. That's what was going on. And then you had hardcore going on, so we had our bad hardcore songs too. And Nausea was the only punk band back then, and we weren't anything like Nausea.

Pete: We really wound up making our own scene.

Bryan: We ended up making a scene out of nothing. We moved to New Brunswick out of high school thinking there was this big punk scene there, and we got there to find there was no punk scene. There were a couple of old bands from the Eighties punk scene who weren't doing anything and everyone else had broken up, and there was no place to play and there were no kids. So we just made something up ourselves.

Pete: We'd have parties at our house and put on shows.

Bryan: Every band in town would play, but back then, there were only three of us - Headstrong, Loose, and us. So we'd have shows in our basement.

Pete: We made our own fun.

Bryan: That's what we did for years. Me and Paul Decolator went to the Roxy one time and talked them into letting us do one show, all ages, and we went and flyer'd the place like crazy and packed the place with kids. That was the first all ages shows in New Brunswick since '84. I still have the flyer. And now today that's still going on. Kids still have shows in their basements. New Brunswick is what people make of it. There's always kid there with energy, making a scene.

Q: I think you guys definitely a tradition. Doing It Yourself is a very powerful idea, but until the first person actually gets up off their butt and does it, nothing happens. Once you guys started the all ages thing in New Brunswick, it really has never stopped.

Bryan: That's the power of New Brunswick. It's the power of the whole punk thing, really. Punk is really what's going on in your own neighborhood. That's when it's effective.

Q: How did the deal with Epitaph happen?

Bryan: I guess someone there kind of liked us and told Brett about us, and he came and saw us at the Whiskey last December. So then he came to New York and told us about the label.

Shal: 'This is how we do things at Epitaph. Blah blah blah.' He talked and talked about how the whole label works.

Bryan: Then he said we had to come out and see the label. You have to visit. So in January we actually went out to L.A. and went to the label, and that's what made up our minds. Everyone there was really cool, they're all into what they're doing. Everyone who is there wants to be there. It was completely different than anything we'd ever seen. It does run the opposite of the majors.

Q: It's funny how many people have the wrong idea about Epitaph, just because it's become so big. One of my writers who's 16 wanted me to ask you how many fans you think you're going to lose because you 'sold out' and signed to Epitaph. That's a question that never would have occurred to me.

Bryan: Yeah, there are kids who think like that. They just don't understand that it's not like that anymore. Epitaph already ran a full life span with its California punk shit. And it turned a lot of kids on the East Coast off. But they've made good, because they're signing good East Coast bands now. We really wanted to be 100% pure East Coast and put our records out on an East Coast label, and we looked desperately for something here that was independent and East Coast. And out of the few offers we had, nothing compared. Again, it comes down to how the label runs and how the people are

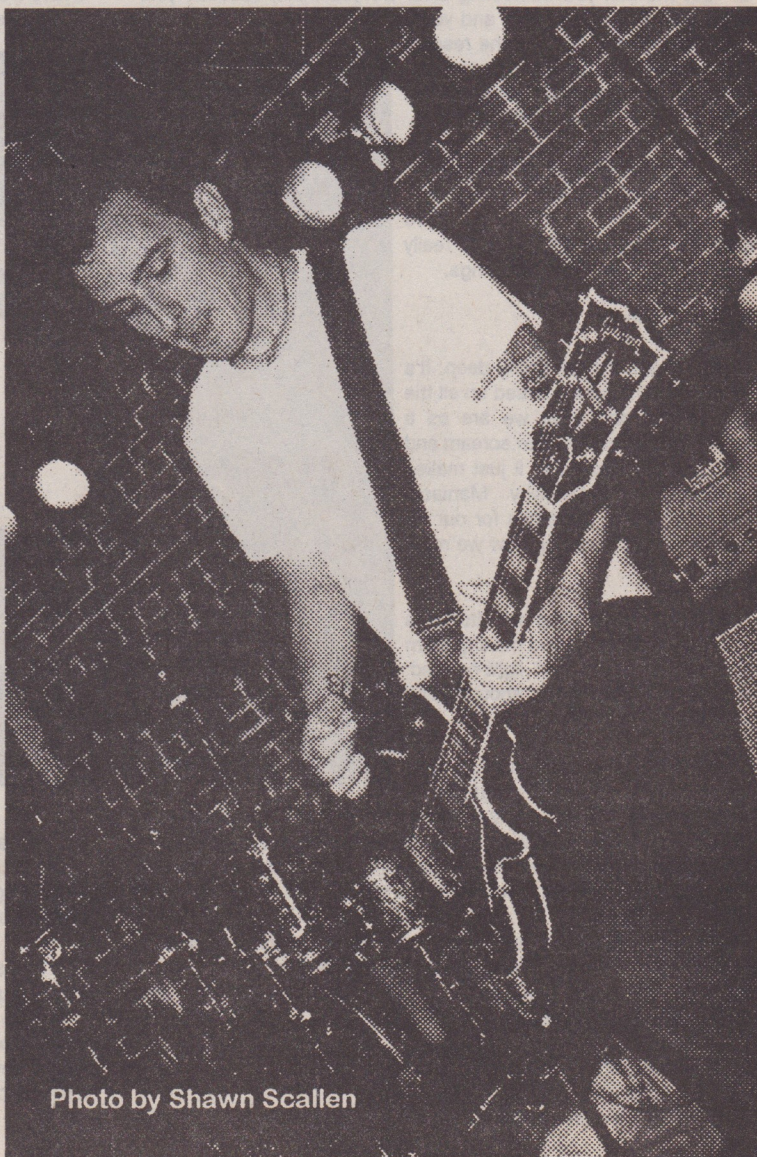


Photo by Shawn Scallen

there, and the people there are cool, even if they are from California. I mean, we're not exactly into the Dischord thing.

Pete: To answer your question about how many fans you think we're going to lose, I do think that the people who like us, like us for what we do and our music and what we stand for, not for who puts our records out. If someone wants to hate us all of a sudden because of who our label is, that's not our problem, really. There's nothing we can do about that.

Greg: Kids who think like that don't understand what it's like to be in a band. And they don't know what it's like to struggle just to pay the rent.

Bryan: We just got an interview in the mail and someone actually asked this, he asked if Epitaph was going to make us do a video. It's weird. The thing about Epitaph that's cool is that they make you do anything, you tell them how you want to do it. Their whole motto is 'We work for you.' We're making videos but not for MTV, just for fun. Every kid who's got a cable access show is gonna get one, and other stations besides MTV will get it. We want to put together a VCR tape with some videos of songs and some live shit and some home movies, just a big fun video to watch, music and images.

Q: Let me ask you something else. Do you think, because your stage presence is so goofy and you have this punk-as-fuck image, that people don't give you the respect you deserve for what you've accomplished? Do you think maybe people don't take you seriously enough.

Bryan: We're not a band that you can judge from first glance. From first glance, it doesn't say one thing. We're more complex, but you have to really read the lyrics and vibe the songs.

Pete: Dig deeper.

Bryan: Yeah, it goes pretty deep. It's goofy and fun, but it's based on all the pain of life, and what we are as a result. Our answer isn't to scream and bitch and cry about life, it just makes us laugh. That's why 'Maniacal Laughter' was a good title for our album, it kind of sums up how we react to life.

Pete: It's all about taking bad situations and turning them around making them kind of humorous and light-hearted. Like, fuck it, don't worry about it. Shit happens to everybody.

Q: I think one of the songs on the new record that's a perfect example is "Kate Is Great." That's really a manifesto. You're talking about how you used to live in the suburbs and had a nice house, and how you consciously made the decision to give all that up and move to New York and be poor so you could be in the band.

Bryan: Yeah, that is the manifesto. That's a very personal song. We just said right out the states of our life and define it in a way. To us, the lyrics run pretty deep as an anthem for ourselves. It's just honest. It's what happened.

Q: Who is Kate?

Bryan: That song was a dedication to our friend, Kate Hiltz. She's

the person now who runs Chunksaa Records for us, so if you write Chunksaa, you're writing to Kate. She's been like a mother to us in our true homeless years. I had knee surgery and couldn't walk for three months and I had no place to live. And she helped me get the surgery for free and then let me live at her house. She hired us at her futon shop in New Brunswick and then let us sneak in there and sleep at night, because we had no place to sleep.

Q: I remember when you were on *BYO*, you must have been staying with them for a while, because I got a promo package from them and you had written a little note on the envelope saying hello.

Pete: Yeah, they had us working out there.

Bryan: We wrote *Maniacal Laughter* and recorded it out there and they let us live at their house. But as long as we were there, well, they're truly DIY. They had us packing envelopes to make ourselves useful.

Q: The assumption probably is that Greg writes all the lyrics but I gather that isn't true.

Bryan: It's a four-way effort. There are some songs that are straight-up Greg, like journal entries, and there are some songs where we literally pass the notebook around in a circle. Most of the goofy joke songs are like that.



Photo by Shawn Scallen

Q: How about musically? Who writes the songs?

Bryan: Again, it's a four-way thing. We sit in a circle with our guitars and jerk off.

Q: That's one advantage of the same four guys being together so long. You know how each other thinks.

Bryan: Totally. Nothing needs to be spoken. It just comes naturally. Songs have to fall on our lap. If you're trying to work towards a song, it's no good.

Pete: The best songs are the ones you write in like five minutes.

Q: Have you ever thought about how long you're going to keep doing this?

Bryan: We've never really thought about the future much. When we do, all we think is that all we really have is each other, and we'll be together forever. We still think that, and I think we always knew it. Partners for life, you know?

[Talk turns to a lot of reminiscing about shows at City Gardens and Maxwells, as well as people we know in common.]

Q: How many people from the old New Brunswick scene do you still see?

Bryan: We still run into a few of the old Brunswick dudes now and then. Most of the old crew that we used to run with are dead or in jail. The only time we see some of the others is when they come by to cop dope. It's kind of fucked.

Q: Have you noticed any changes in the kids who come to shows over the years?

Bryan: It seems a little less dangerous than it used to be. Maybe it's because for so many fucking years, but nothing really shocks us or scares us anymore.

Pete: There's a lot less scary old people at shows who'd beat the shit out of you at shows now.

Bryan: Yeah, like the people who lived with us at Welton Street, our first house in New Brunswick, those people use to roam the streets and go to shows. Those were days of the punks and skins. Those guys were serious criminals, man. Today you just got a lot of these cute kids.

Q: Doesn't it seem like the age has really dropped at shows. When you started, it was like 16 year olds and up. Now you go to a show and it's ten year olds.

Bryan: Yeah, itty bitty little kids.

Pete: Little tiny kids. With a lot of heart.

Bryan: God bless 'em. Shows used to seem more serious, and people were more old and scary.

Pete: Maybe that's just because we were so young.

Q: That's the great curse of being in a punk band, though. You get a year older every year but the audience is always the same age.

Bryan: Yeah, that's true. I've definitely noticed that. There's nobody our age that's hanging out at shows. It keeps you young though.

Pete: You ask your friends to come to shows now and they're like, no, we don't wanna go out. They're all married and having kids and shit.

Bryan: Yeah, it's weird. But we never planned on having any other future. The first time I got a tattoo on my forearm, I was just like, fuck it. Now I'm covered with tattoos. I couldn't get a straight job now if I wanted one. Those of us who went to college at all just dropped out right away. Went for a year and said, fuck it, we're doing the band. And we took a lot of shit for it too from everyone. 'You guys better get serious, go to school or do something, get a trade. What do you think you're gonna do with your life, the band?' Well, fuck you. And now those same people are like, 'wow, you're a rock star.' Well, fuck you, I'm still struggling. But I'll come to your job where you're working for the man in your suit and call you a sellout. So fuck you."

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Pat DiNizio

of the Smithereens



Interview and photos by Jim Testa

If all the Smithereens ever did was record a few truly memorable pop albums, that would be enough. But this blue-collar Jersey quartet did so much more in its 18-year history - first and foremost by proving that an unabashedly New Jersey-bred rock band could overcome the elitism of New York's downtown club scene and find success on its own terms.

The Smithereens started with a simple idea - take a deep-rooted love of British Invasion pop (Beatles, Kinks, Who) and marry it to a modern lyrical consciousness. Singer/songwriter Pat DiNizio was trafficking in angst a decade before anyone had heard the word grunge, just as guitarist Jim Babjak found inventive ways of translating DiNizio's simple three-chord melodies into unforgettable rock anthems. And the Smithereens accomplished what almost none of those snooty New York band ever did - they had a string of hit records that sold well and were played on the radio all over the country.

Looking back, it seems hard to believe that the Smithereens were never interviewed in Jersey Beat before. They were the bedrock on which today's New Brunswick band scene was formed, bringing notoriety (and a steady draw) to the Court Tavern back in the years when the term "NJ band" was almost a joke.

If you've never heard the Smithereens, do yourself a favor and find a copy of *Attack Of The Smithereens* (Capitol), a 1995 compilation that collects outtakes, demos, and live versions of the best of the band's original material along with a mind-warping collection of super-cool covers. Then go back and fill in the blanks: *Especially For You*, the band's debut LP, which launched the surprise radio hit "Blood And Roses" and got them on their way; *Green Thoughts*; and the majestic *Smithereens 11* (described by the Trouser Press Record Guide as "terse, tuneful, and towering.") 1991's *Blow Up* is a bit of a letdown and while their one-shot album for RCA, *A Date With The Smithereens*, has its moments, it's not the place to start either.

Actually, the place to start with the Smithereens is by sitting down and talking to the 41-year old sage, figurehead, businessman, and songsmith who has guided the band throughout its long career, Pat DiNizio. I had to a chance to do just that over a Coke and a slice

before the Smithereens' bravura performance at Cavestomp '97 in mid-October.

Q: I think the first question on the mind of myself and your fans is, what exactly is the status of the Smithereens?

Pat: The Smithereens are about to sign a deal with Velvel, and Velvel is about to work out something with BMG. So it's going to be an indie label with major distribution, but they'll be autonomous. It will almost be like the way Enigma was, except the people at Velvel have a lot more experience. At Enigma, they were flying by the seat of their pants most of the time and they were very lucky at a certain point, where they had us and Stryper and Poison and did very well. But they got too big, too fast, and they went under. I saw it coming.

It was almost like they planned it.

Q: Didn't they give a million dollar contract to David Cassidy, and then when his big comeback didn't sell, they went bankrupt.

Pat: Yes, I think you're right. They had David Cassidy.

Q: Hopefully the people at Velvel won't do something like that.

Pat: I like the people at Velvel a lot. I like Walter Yetnikoff, he's a very humane guy. He's been very kind of me. And he does a lot of charity work behind the scenes. He had a bad reputation at one time and I think he's worked very hard to set that right and change his image. And all the people at the label, they've all had at least ten years major label experience.

Q: It seems like it's been quite a while since the Smithereens have done anything. Has it been hard keeping the band together?

Pat: Well, what you have to understand is that we're one of the few bands who have survived for such a long time. It's going on 18 years. We're fortunate because the band is revered in certain circles. It really is. And it still gives a lot of pleasure to a lot of people. And the back catalog still sells very well. I'm just saying this as a matter of fact. We're still able to go out on the road and command

BEAUTY & SADNESS (& SURVIVAL)



the same kind of money we made five years ago, because we made a decision a long time ago that if you want the Smithereens, you pay for the Smithereens. And people know what they're going to get. We built our reputation up after so many years. Now recently we've been maintaining a profile by playing a lot of festival dates, all summer. They're ideal gigs for us. Because we are a reflection of our audience. They're older, as we all are, they have children, they have mortgages, they have jobs, and we're still doing what we do, they're doing what they do and they've come along for the ride. It's a beautiful thing, because they're still rocking. And we're the ideal band for that audience, because we haven't lost any of our aggressiveness, or any of the feistiness of the band. Especially live.

Q: What I was asking, though, is that you left Capitol under not the best of circumstances, then there was the one-shot deal with RCA. I would think there would be a certain amount of pressure for you at that point to give it up and try something else.

Pat: Well, you remember the title of that last good Ramones album, "Too Tough To Die." We're the living embodiment of that spirit. And besides, I can't do anything else at this point. I have no job skills for anything else. I could probably do something else, but I really don't want. And I can still earn a decent living doing this, and I still have my talent, and I try to nurture it as much as possible.

Q: Well, if anyone understands that, it's me. I've been doing Jersey Beat for 15 years so I admire people who survive and don't give up.

Pat: We have that New Jersey survival instinct. It's part of who we are and where we're from. And the fact that we were adults before we became successful. At the time we got the record deal, we weren't 21 where we had this notion that the world owed us a living. We worked hard for everything. And we were fairly scorned by everybody else for a good long time. We couldn't get a gig at the Peppermint Lounge like everybody else, or Danceteria. And it was that toughness that developed. We did insane things in those days. We'd go on the road 320 days out of the year to promote an album. We'd take money out of our own pockets to hire record pluggers, to plug the singles to radio when the label lost interest. We never gave up. People don't realize some of the things we did because we believed in ourselves. And we still believe in ourselves. That's why we're still doing it. And I would say everyone in the band is just a nice as they ever were. And as decent and hardworking. We have that toughness that keeps us going. And pride. I think it's pride more than anything else that keeps us going, personal pride.

On The Smithereens:

You remember the title of that last good Ramones album, "Too Tough To Die?"

We're the living embodiment of that spirit. And besides, I can't do anything else at this point. I have no job skills for anything else. I could probably do something else, but I really don't want to. And I can still earn a decent living doing this, and I still have my talent, and I try to nurture it as much as possible.

Q: There's a whole generation of songwriters from the Eighties - Richard Barone of the Bongos, Marshall Crenshaw, Mitch Easter, Scott Miller, Peter Holsapple, Chris Stills - all people who came along about the same time you did and who have persevered, and yet were never in the right place at the right time to have that big commercial hit record. At this point in your lives, is that a kinship there? Do you feel part of something with those other people?

Pat: Well, we actually sold a few more records than most of those people. Which was amazing. I never thought we'd sell more than 2000 records. But I know what you're saying. Now that we're all older and life has kicked everybody around a bit and we're not kid, there's a definite kinship. Richard (Barone) and I are very good friends. Back in the days of the Bongos, who knows what was going through his head? He's a lot nicer now than he was in those days. Back then, you have to remember, there was a certain competition. And they were in a certain scene that developed and we were left out of most of that. The dB's, unfortunately, they always had this smug, superior attitude. They'd never even say hi to me. These days, it's a little different. (Smithereens drummer) Dennis (Diken) is very good friends with Peter Holsapple now. But you had that circuit of bands back then who got the gigs and the publicity, and we existed outside of that. We couldn't get a gig anywhere in Manhattan except Folk City. But for some reason, it clicked for us commercially. Maybe it was the songs, it might have been the spirit of the band, it might have been the fact that we wouldn't let anything enter the world of the Smithereens that would disrupt it, and we've subordinated each individual ego for the sake of the band.

Q: Any regrets?

Pat: I think there are certain musical moments, certain moments on certain albums that could have been better. Especially the *Blow Up* album. The demos for that album really anticipated the whole grunge thing. The demos were really dirty and almost violent. And Ed Stasium (producer of *Blow Up*) was going through a bad time in his life at that time. His wife left him the first day of that project. So I don't think he... There are fades on that album that last four minutes. I don't think we were on top of it. And we had just expected that album to sell because 11 had done so well so maybe we didn't put as much effort into it as we should have.. So there are certain things that could have been done better, or in terms of the sounds of the guitars or the mix. But in terms of the band and what we've done with our lives? No, I don't have any regrets. I really don't. There are times I think perhaps I should have gone to law school, which was my original intent when I was at NYU. But when I

dropped out to start the band, that all ended. I've had a steady income, but anything I've been able to provide for my family, and the ability of the rest of the band to provide for their families based on songs that I write, so I have to write songs that will be popular and get played on the radio... It's a tremendous burden. Whereas when you graduate from medical school or law school, you know you'll have a steady income when you get out. With music, there's no guarantee. I've had a very exciting life, and I - and the rest of the guys in the band - have crammed ten or twenty lifetimes into one, with all the traveling we've done and all the people we've met, and all the joy that we've felt with the things that we've done. It's been a great ride. As long as it's still fun, and as long as we can still do it, we won't stop. But again, all of us are married, all of us have kids and houses and necessities that everyone should have and enjoy in life. (Former bassist) Mike (Mesaros) used to say that he lived like a college student his whole life so he could stay in the band. I didn't necessarily agree with him by I see what he meant. By not owning a house, by not owning a nice car, by living frugally, you take a lot of pressure off. All of us make our own choices.

Q: How did the solo album come about?

Pat: I didn't go searching for a solo deal. We were sort of in career limbo because we refused to go to the major labels, knocking on their door hat in hand like beggars with a demo tape. We couldn't do it, with all we had achieved and everything. We weren't willing to do that. Then I had a chance encounter with Bob Frank, who is president of Velvel. He had come over after running Polygram in Nashville for five years, and was working with Walter Yetnikoff. And he asked me what I was doing, and I said nothing, so he asked me if I was interested in doing a solo record. It was what was offered at the time. I was always much more interested in doing a Smithereens record. That's really my chosen vehicle for musical self-expression, but the solo record was offered. And I sort of knew that if I did a good record, they'd be interested in the Smithereens, and sure enough, that's what happened.

Q: There are subtle differences but any Smithereens fan will instantly recognize that it's you on the solo album.

Pat: There are subtle differences obviously. But I know how to write in one three-chord style. It's what I do and I'm good at it. No one does it quite like me, and no one else sounds like me. I'm blessed with a voice that doesn't sound like anybody else's, for better or voice. So you know it's my voice, and that's always been one of the hallmarks of the Smithereens. The way the guys on the solo record interpret the material is totally unlike the way the band would interpret the same songs. And that's a beautiful thing, because I didn't want it to sound exactly like a Smithereens record. It had to have enough of a hook musically, enough familiarity so people would know who it was, but I also liked the notion of cross-pollinating all these musicians from different backgrounds with my pop sensibilities. (Bassist) JJ (Burnel) was in one of the original pioneering punk bands, the Stranglers. (Saxophonist) Sonny (Fortune) made his reputation with Miles Davis, and (drummer) Tony Smith can play just about anything. The players on the record never sat down in the same room together before we started recorded. Sonny came to the studio never having heard anything by the Smithereens, so he was totally unprepared. JJ knew some of the early Smithereens albums but he didn't learn any of the songs for the solo record. So we made up a lot of stuff on the spot, and it gelled very quickly. I was very happy with the sessions.

Q: Here's a question I like to ask people in your situation. If you had to fill out an application and there was a tiny line where it said "Occupation," what would you write down?

Pat: I would put down "musician." Or songwriter. I was at an auto dealer and I was filling out the lease application for my station wagon, and where is said "Occupation?" I put down "musician." So the guy sitting behind the desk at the leasing office says, "Musician? What kind of musician are you, Mr. DiNizio?" And I said I played in a band. "Well, might I have heard this band?" he says. So I told him the Smithereens. Well, the guy sits back in his chair and he goes, "The Smithereens? The Smithereens are one of the finest pop-rock bands

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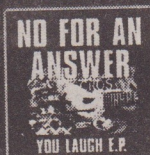
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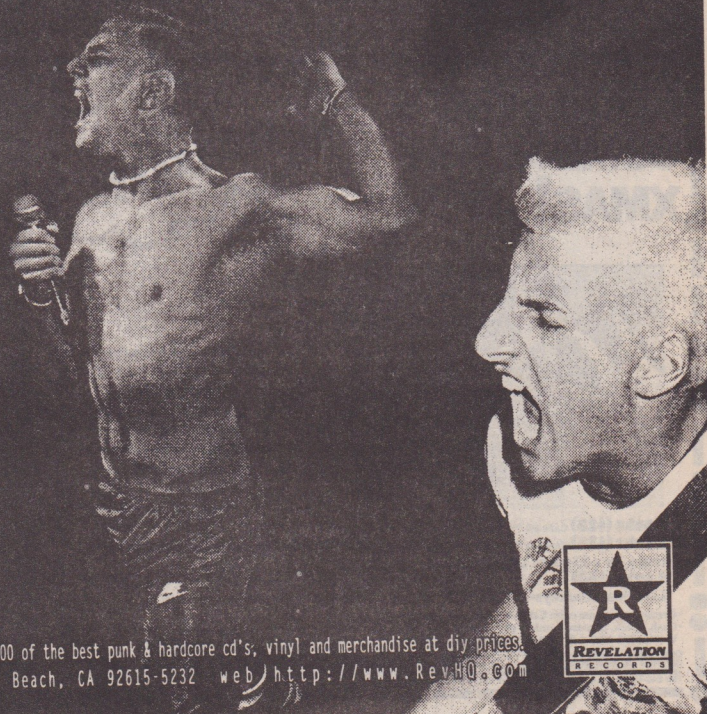
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in the nation. I am very pleased to meet you." So it made the lease application process go very quickly. It's funny, the people you meet who know your work. So that's what I put down: Musician.

Q: Which is different from "songwriter." A songwriter will write songs even if he doesn't have a band, or doesn't have any way to perform or record for a while.

Pat: You're right. In that sense, I'm really not a songwriter. I don't feel driven to write songs if I don't have a project. Especially after our first album was a bit of a fluke success. It took five years to write all those songs and establish the band's sound. And then I had about a month to write the followup album, *Green Thoughts*. And I rose to the occasion, but I didn't know if I had anything left. I don't sit around with a guitar all the time and write songs, nor do I obsess over music. When I listen to music now, I sit down with intent, and I really *listen* to records now, whether it's Miles Davis or the Stranglers or Billie Holliday. It's a lot different. I think it's a shame that music has been relegated to the status of so much background noise. Everybody has to have music going all the time, and it diminishes the importance of music in your life. It shouldn't be muzak, it shouldn't just be something that's on all the time. So in any event, I haven't really written a song because I felt the need to in a long time, and I don't know if I ever did. I write for a project, I write because we're doing an album. The contradiction is this: I'm writing all the time in my head. I walk away and I have a melody in my mind. And the good ones stay in my head. That's what happened with this solo record. The ideas were floating around for a long time, they were complete songs for a long time. But the way my work process is, I don't even write them down or sing them into a tape recorder. Because the ones that are really valid and beautiful and have meaning always resurface. So I'm always thinking musically, but I don't consider myself an artist in the sense that I need to be writing songs all the time.

Q: Bob Dylan once said that the songs were just there, in the air, and he was just the guy who wrote them down.

Pat: Well, I think he said that so we'd think he was more humble than he really is. You have to really work at writing songs, and there's great pleasure in writing a song that you know is really good, and it makes you happy, and you know other people are going to like. There's that moment, and that's the finest, most pleasurable moment on every level, especially emotionally. When you know you've done a good piece of work.

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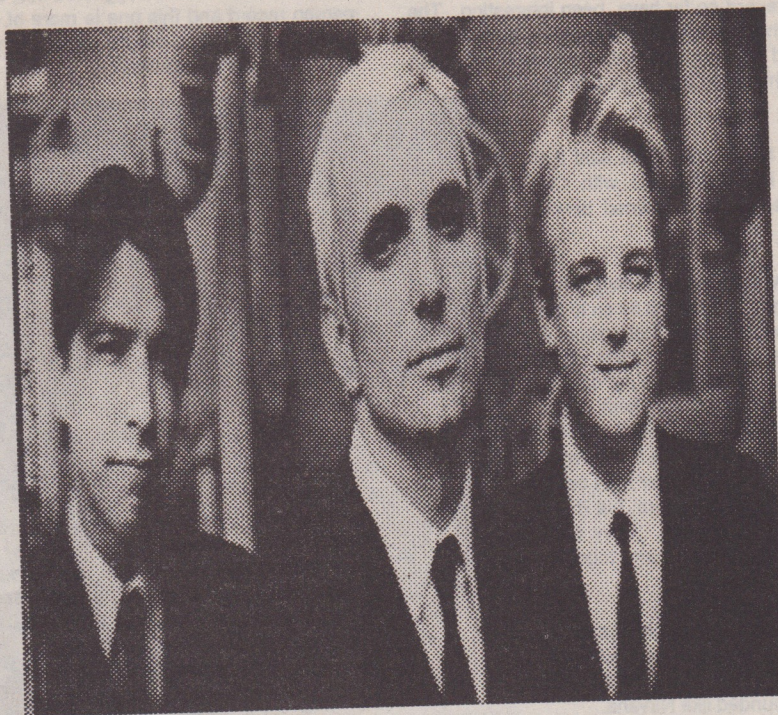
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Why Is This Man Smiling?



Everclear's Art Alexakis on Zen and the Art of Career Maintenance

By Jim Testa

They say if you stand at the corner of Hollywood & Vine long enough, you'll eventually meet everyone in the world. The same thing goes for publishing a fanzine. That's as good an explanation as any for how I came to know Art Alexakis, the goateed guru of a dysfunctional generation, the lead singer, songwriter, and producer of the Portland, Oregon grunge-punk trio Everclear.

It was 1993, and I was doing a Demo Tape Listening Panel at the South By Southwest music convention. And, you guessed it, an unknown trio from Portland named Everclear threw their demo into the hopper. The other two members of the panel - one a hotshot produced, the other the president of a big British record label - took one listen to Everclear's "World Of Noise" demo and gave it the thumbs down. "It's been done," they said. "That sound is over." But I disagreed. I liked the energy and the melody, and so what if it sounded a little like Nirvana? This band rocked, and I said so.

Chalk one up for the kid.

A few months after that, Tim Kerr Records released "World Of Noise" as Everclear's first album, and a few months after that, Capitol Records signed the band and released it again. Not much happened until Capitol released Everclear's second album, *Sparkle And Fade*, in 1995. This time, Alexakis' bittersweet stories of troubled young people searching for answers - captured in moving songs like "Heroin Girl," "Queen Of The Air," and the album's big hit single, "Santa Monica" - hit a nerve.

It probably wasn't surprising that listeners responded to Alexakis' lyrics; everybody loves an underdog. And clearly,

people liked the man's honesty. He didn't try to hide his checkered past, or conceal the fact that, at 34, he was a good deal older than most pop stars having their first hit record. His songs dealt honestly about his life as a junkie, and about the friends and lovers he had left behind.

It didn't hurt that those biting lyrics were set to instantly memorable melodies, or that the band - Alexakis, bassist Craig Montoya and drummer Greg Eklund - could rock like a mofo. *Sparkle And Fade* went platinum and then some, and in the Spring of 1997 - four years after two industry heavyweights told him his demo tape sucked - Art Alexakis returned to South By Southwest. This time, he gave the Keynote Speech.

I ran into Art a few times at SXSW and we shared a laugh over the demo tape story. He said then that he'd be happy to do an interview when his next record came out, and true to his word, a call came from Capitol Records to set it up, a few weeks before the release of Everclear's third album, *So Much For The Afterglow*. This interview was done by phone in early October.

Q: Let's start by talking about music. Since the term is always applied to you, what do you think of the word 'grunge'?

Art: I don't know what it means. (laughs) I really, honestly do not know. I've been playing in rock and roll bands since... well, I'm 35, so it's a long time, you know? And I've gotten used to words that press people come up with for different music. That's all 'grunge' is. I think I know what grunge is, and I know a couple of bands that exemplify it to me. I don't think we sound anything like those bands and we never have. We came out of a region that made it easy for people to say, oh, that's where they're coming from. Grunge Rock. Grunge Popsters. We've always gotten

that.

Q: In one of the reviews of the new album, and it was actually a positive review, the reviewer said something that floored me...

Art: This reviews for this record so far have been interesting. The *Rolling Stone* review was the only bad review I've ever gotten in my whole life. And then I found out why. The guy who wrote it is English and hates punk bands. Why would they give him that article?

Q: Well, the review that I'm talking about said that musically, Everclear was interchangeable with Offspring and the Foo Fighters. That seemed almost insulting to me.

Art: That was *Details*. I wasn't insulted really, I just think that was a case of a writer who didn't listen to our record very much. Maybe the first song, that's about it. 'A little Beach Boys, a little punk rock.' First of all, Offspring... Give me a fucking break. I'm not criticizing those guys but we sound nothing like them. And Foo Fighters? I don't get it. Just like I don't get the Nirvana thing. I've listened to Nirvana and I've listened to us and I don't think we sound alike, other than being hard rock bands. There's a similarity there, but that's like taking Aerosmith and Led Zeppelin. They don't sound anything alike but you lump them together because they both played very loudly.

Q: The Nirvana thing has been going on forever. I remember at the demo panel at South By Southwest in 1993, the two industry guys gave you the thumbs down because they said it sounded like Nirvana.

Art: You know what that was. You hear something one time and you make a snap decision about it. It's such bullshit because I don't write lyrics like Kurt Cobain, I don't sound like him when I sing. Guitar-wise, we don't really play the same. *World Of Noise* was probably closer to that, but that was never really meant to be a record. That was our first demo that we made when the band was only six months old. So by the time that record came out a year later, we were a different band. But I'll tell you, I don't pay much attention to what people say. If people are being objective and honest, they can say whatever they want, and if it's not flattering, I can accept that. But if people just have an agenda - which we get a lot, especially in Portland - then you just have to take it from where it's coming from.

Q: You've always produced yourself but I think this record is the first time you really had the kind of budget where you could do anything you wanted to do in the studio. Was that a liberating feeling? There seem to be a lot of little things on this new record that are just there for no other reason than you could do them, like the Beach Boys vocal intro on the first track, or some of the electronic effects peppered throughout the album.

Art: Well, *World Of Noise* we made ourselves as a demo for practically no money. For the next one, Capitol gave me a decent budget for a first record, and I pretty much did what I wanted to do. I wanted something that sounded a little different and more diverse than *World Of Noise*, which wasn't hard because *World Of Noise* was a very myopic record. And we did that. And then with this record, I wanted to do the same. I see us doing at least two more records after this, maybe three. But I can't see us doing any more than that. Then maybe a solo record or two, and then I'll go off and do something else. I'm already starting a new label. I love making

records and I want to keep doing it as long as I have something to say, but I think most bands have peaked after their first four records and should call it a day. Not always, but it usually works that way.

Q: Another reviewer suggested that *Sparkle And Fade* was a first person record and this one is more of a second person record, it's you talking to other people rather than just talking about yourself. Would you agree with that?



Art Alexakis, circa 'Sparkle & Fade'

Art: No, I think this record is pretty first-person. I think I write first person a lot, and I like it that way. I think my favorite songs by other people are written in the first person, whether it's autobiographical or not.

Q: You're one of the few people I can think of today who is writing pop music that's actually about real things, not just pop songs or love songs. I think that's why so many people respond to your music. For instance, on the new record there's the song about Prozac. That drug is a hot topic and you seem to have very definite opinions.

Art: Oh sure. I've been on and off Prozac and other anti-depressants since I got clean in '84. I've tried the serotonin inhibitors such as Prozac, and people in my family have been on

them too. It's interesting how some people use it in a good way and it really, really helps them, and sometimes people just misuse it as a chemical Band-Aid. It was interesting to put that into a song. There are a couple of songs like that. The song "Amphetamine" talks about characters dealing with chemical imbalances, trying to make a good place in their life and having a hard time finding a solid footing.

Q: You picked some industry to work in, as far as running across people with chemical dependencies.

Art: Oh totally. You can't escape it. But I think that's true in every walk of life today, not just the music business.

Q: Your drug of choice was cocaine, as I recall.

Art: Yeah. I liked heroin too, but mostly cocaine. I used to shoot coke and speed. Those were my drugs. Then I'd smoke dope to come down on. But I was poor, man. I'd do whatever I could get.

Q: You've said many times that you were really lucky to put all that behind you before you started Everclear.

Art: Oh yeah. I guess there are people who can do both, but when I was doing drugs, I really couldn't do anything else constructive. I wouldn't have been able to have a career. And if I had had this kind of success when I was still doing drugs, I would have totally self-destructed.

Q: Let's talk about a couple of the other songs. I'm especially curious about "One Hit Wonder" and "California King." They're both about people who have achieved some success and take a turn for the worse because of it, and I don't know if that's you pointing fingers at other people, or you just looking in the mirror.

Art: Both. "California King" to me is looking at me. And other people.

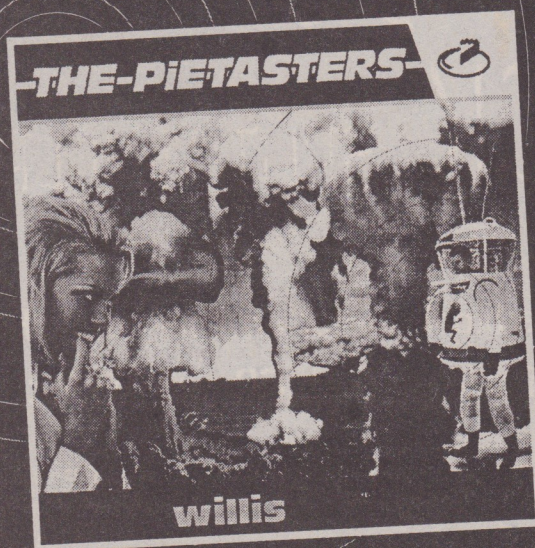
I generally don't write about just one situation, there will be two or three people that I combine to create the characters in my songs. So a lot of that song is me, but it's looking at me through the eyes of a rock critic, through the eyes of someone who has an agenda with the band. Because there are people who will say things like, "why do you keep talking about the past? Why don't you just get on with it I'm sick of all this confessional crap?" Well, people keep asking me questions. That's why I keep talking about those things. I'm not confessing to anything, I'm just talking about what I know, and people either like it or they don't. If you don't like it, don't buy the records.

"One Hit Wonder" is not about myself. I don't consider myself a one hit wonder. A one hit wonder to me - in life, not just in music - is a person who doesn't take chances, who can't sustain relationships, can't sustain anything. The one hit wonder in music is the people who are signed because they've written one hit song and put out that one hit single. Then they do another record and they're not selling anymore, and they can't figure it out, because they sold a lot of records before. They don't grow, they don't try anything new, they just keep reliving that one moment. I just laugh at these people who are so intent on being famous. The guy in Bush is one of those guys. It's just funny to me. There are a couple of lines in there that might come home to me. People are going to say what they're going to say.

Q: Not that you're in any danger of being a one hit wonder, but *Sparkle And Fade* sold close to 2 million copies. With what's been going on in the record industry this year, a lot of records that were expected to be huge hits have flopped. Are you at all worried about this new record selling as well as the last one?

Art: I don't worry about it. I think if you make a really good record and you define your own sound, people are going to pick up on it. And besides, looking at what just the single's done already, it's No. 7 on the Alternative Charts, Top Twenty on the Rock Charts, it's only

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been a couple of weeks and right off the bat, it's really climbing the charts in a big way and getting great response from call-in requests. It's getting 'great phones,' as they say. (laughs) We've always worked under the assumption that if we make music that excites us and makes us happy, it will excite and please other people as well. Who knows in this economy what will happen? But I think we'll sell a good enough amount of records to keep the wolves off my back. (laughs)

Q: Sometimes in the music industry, though, the hit thing takes on a life of its own. It gets to be not about music anymore, but just about numbers. But I don't really see you falling into that trap.

Art: No, I don't think that's going to happen. I have my priorities in the right order and I know this is a finite thing. And I think I appreciate it more now, with it happening later in life than it usually does in this business. I have a family and that's where my emotional priorities lie. That keeps me balanced. I still get weird every now and then. Fame is a weird thing. I never wanted to be a famous person; not really famous, not in that sense. And sometimes it gets hard to deal with. It's bizarre for all of us but it's something you've got to learn to deal with.

Q: How about the other two guys in the band? They're a lot younger than you are. How are they handling all that's happened to you?

Art: They're cool. My drummer (Greg Ecklund) just got married and he and his wife moved to L.A. He didn't really care where he lived and she wanted to live there because of school. And he's going to be touring for the next year or two, so it doesn't really matter where he lives. As long as she's safe and happy, that was the important thing. (Bassist) Craig (Montoya) is engaged and just bought a house in Atlanta, Georgia. They're pretty grounded kids.

Q: It's kind of amazing that you met Craig by running a classified ad

in the local music paper. You guys have become a pretty tight unit.

Art: We're best friends. Both of those guys are my best friends. Me and Craig were two of the best men at Greg's wedding, they were the best men at my wedding, and I assume in the not too distant future that Greg and I will be part of Craig's wedding when he gets married. They're two of the most important people in my life and I really enjoy being with them. We look at the band as a big family, and we try to take care of each others' needs and wants. Everybody knows what his job is and we work together as a team.

Q: I think they really don't get enough credit...

Art: I agree.

Q: ...but in a way, you being the main focus of the band might be good for them. It's probably shielded them from some of the harsher realities of being a celebrity.

Art: They get it, it's just not as intense. But they get it as well. They do their jobs really well and they contribute to the band. They sing more on this record, and now we're at the stage where I'd like to have them start writing songs by the next record. They're interested in doing that, whereas before they weren't. But if one of those guys didn't want to be in the band anymore, I'd break up the band. I wouldn't keep doing it with anyone else. I think their parts are very distinctive. And I think you're right, they don't get enough credit.

But let's be honest. They don't write songs, they don't produce the music. I do the lion's share of the work. As far as the whole stardom thing goes, people just want to focus in on the singer anyway. Look at *Rolling Stone*. How many times have they said they were going to put the whole band on the cover, and then at the last minute, they switch and just put the main guy on the cover? They do it all the time. I hate that. I wouldn't allow it to happen, because we're a band.

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Q: I don't know if Craig and Greg would get recognized if they walked down the street, though, whereas I'm sure you do.

Art: But don't forget, I'm a weird looking person. I'm distinctive looking, with the blond hair and bent nose, so people focus in on that. Nobody knows it's blond just to cover up all the gray. Craig is the cute one, I'm the scary one, and Greg sits behind the drums. Greg right now is totally enamored with the Spice Girls, by the way. That's all he talks about.

Q: I think things like the Spice Girls and Hanson are proof that we're on the verge of something really good coming along again. It seems like whenever music starts getting very weird and all these manufactured pop acts hit the charts, it means the last big trend has died and we're ready for something else to come along, just like it did with Nirvana.

Art: I think you're quite right. I think there's going to be some very cool, weird stuff coming out. There are already some bands out there that don't realize how important they're going to be. I think Atari Teenage Riot is very cool. I think Daft Punk could be cool, although my jury is still out on that. I have an idea of where we're taking the next record, and it's going to be quite a bit different from this record, but hopefully it will still be recognizable as Everclear.

Q: The problem with bands like that is that the music industry knows how to tell rock bands, it doesn't know how to sell dance music. So they're going to put all these dance acts up on a stage in concert halls where people can't dance and then wonder why nobody has a good time.

Art: Oh yeah, it's not a live thing. The only way they're going to sell that kind of music in America is to pattern it after a rock band. Like Prodigy. I don't think they sell so many records because they make good or interesting music. I don't think their music holds a candle to the Chemical Brothers. But the Chemical Brothers are pretty imageless. You can't sell that to some kid. But you can still some scary looking guy with a piercing in his nose and a crazy haircut.

Q: You're starting off with kind of a crazy marketing plan for this record yourself, you're going across the country making appearances in record stores.

Art: Yeah, in stores. I think they're cool. I know when I was a kid, I would have loved to have seen some of the bands that were popular then up close like that, in a record store. Let's face it, it's good for retail, but it's a lot of fun for us too. We get to actually see and meet our fans. The tour we're doing right after that is all small halls, like 600 to 1200 people. Then we'll come back after we do Europe, like in April or May, and play bigger places. But not too big.

Q: You've have a taste of arena tours.

Art: More than a taste. We did a whole shed tour (summer radio festivals, usually in sports stadiums) and we did really well, sold quite a few of them out. But I hated it. I hate playing big, big places. I'll never headline a show like that again, not unless it just gets stupid and there's no place else to play because we have to play to so many people.

Q: R.E.M. always used to promise that they'd never play arenas. Then they got popular and they had to play them.

Art: Yeah, well, it happens. I'm not saying never, I'm just saying that I hate doing it. I get a lot of email from kids who ask how come we don't play the big whatsis-dome in their town, 'cause they can get in there and they can't get in to see us if we play clubs. But I just tell 'em, sorry, I don't like playing those places, and at this point, they don't really want us anyway. Although at this point, I think we could

go from anywhere from five to ten thousand seats and sell it out. But I think a thousand people is perfect. That's a great crowd. Five hundred is great. I think it's just great to play smaller places.

Q: What else is going on with the new record?

Art: We actually just made a video last night, for "Everywhere, Everyone." We made one about a month ago and scrapped it. It was a very expensive mistake. We did this second video on a shoestring. It's still a lot of money but it's not even half of what the first one was. But it was ridiculous and we scrapped it. It just sucked. Didn't look good, didn't come out good. It's shameful how much money is wasted, it's shameful.

Q: I always say that's why CD's cost \$16.

Art: Oh come on. You don't pay \$16 for CD's. You wait until they go on sale and get them for \$9.99. And you don't buy CD's anyway, you get them all for free.

Q: Hey, I still buy a few.

I love music, I live for music. I'm constantly looking for something that's going to inspire me and get me excited. I don't get it as much as I want. I'm pretty picky, and the older I get, it seems like the less open you are to some things. But I'm still looking.

Art: Me too. I get some CD's given to me but I still go out and buy them.

Q: Are you still a fan? You're at the age now where most people stop listening to new stuff.

Art: Oh no, not at all. I love music, I live for music. I'm constantly looking for something that's going to inspire me and get me excited. I don't get it as much as I want. I'm pretty picky, and the older I get, it seems like the less open you are to some things. But I'm still looking.

Q: You're an A&R guy now too, no?

Art: Actually, my contract with Capitol ran out a few weeks ago and I opted not to renew, and I am starting a label. So I'm more than an A&R guy, I'm the label president. I can't tell you the name of the label yet because that's all still being worked out. I have three acts already that I want to sign that are very diverse, all pretty different. Not only punk rock. My criteria for signing a band is a distinctive voice, interesting lyrics, and a sense of themselves. And I think all these bands have it. So I'm excited. And I'm touring again too, with an extra guitar player, so it all sounds really big now. Even the old stuff sounds BIG, with two old big-ass guitars on stage just kicking ass. It's fun being in a rock and roll band.

Q: Well, it's supposed to be.

Art: Yes, it is supposed to be fun. This is a great job. When I was doing it for three years straight, it stopped being fun for a while, but I knew that would be a temporary thing. I just wanted to start playing some new songs. So now I am playing new songs, and with another guitar player, even playing the old songs has a new vigor to it. So I couldn't be happier.

THE BICYCLES (PO Box 596, New York NY 10012) Four keyboard-driven instrumentals. The music is generically "alternative" in a light pop vein, but without aggressive melodies or zinging riffs, there's nothing here that sticks in your head. - Jim T.

BLACKFEET - "Live At The Lion's Den, NYC 11/2/97" (35 Mohawk Ave., Oceanport NJ 07757) This popular Jersey shore-based funk outfit keeps the beats flowing smoothly on this live tape, with fluid rapped vocals, some cooking percussion, and lots of slinky wah-wah'd guitar licks. Not the kind of band I'd ordinarily hang out with, but if you're into shaking your groove thang, check 'em out. - Jim T.

BLUEBERRIE SPY - 4 song demo (PC Management) Bouncy pop-rock with girl vocals that reminds me a bit of Eve's Plum. The production is very full, with lots of cool background riffs and harmony vocals, in a New-Wavey style. And how can you not love a song title like "Hey Judas"? - Jim T.

BONGO JONES - "Deelicious!!!" Demo (55 Sharon Rd., Robinsville NJ 08691; email bongopunk@aol.com) It's hard to judge a band from a 2-song demo, especially when - like Bongo Jones - each song goes off in several different directions. "Eulogy For Me" starts out as melodic guitar chug, segues into a ska verse which erupts into a Springsteenish bar-band sax solo, and then back to a harmony-charged power-pop chorus. "Falling" confuses things even more by falling into a somewhat-cheesy power-ballad mode before speeding things up and throwing in breakbeats and some metal influences. Except for the fact that I liked the first song more than the second, I can't offer much else. - Jim T.

BROKEN JONES (Kevin Monteleone, 1104 Almshouse Rd., Ivyland PA 18974) Sincere alt.rock in that Live-meets-R.E.M. style. The singer emotes, the guitars chug, and the rhythm section gives it all an above-average bounciness that's quite appealing. - Jim T.

CATHODE BOB - "Amused" (201 301 2120) The 8-track production compresses the hell out of the guitars and distorts the vocals, but you can still hear the seeds of a decent hard rock band underneath all the noise. Lots of wah-wah and power chords along with the frenetic vocals suggest something like a garagier version of Reef or Our Lady Peace, an up and coming genre we'll call Angry Alt-Metal. - Jim T.

COJOBA - "Espiritu de Punk" (Calle 7 C-19, Metropolis, Carolina PR 00987) This band offers a treasure in female vocalist/lyricist Taina. The opening song on this 14-track demo cassette shows off her respect for Spanish singing tradition, with lingering dances across the lyrics of *Gobierno Mundial* (World Government). Otherwise, get ready for a roller-coaster punk ride from this band. English translations of lyrics are provided by the band, with Taina on vocals, Javier on bass and drum machine and Gilbert on guitars. This band in 1996, then helped join old with new bands to enrich Puerto Rico's punk scene. All songs are sung in Spanish except the smooth rocker *During The Trip*, in English. - ChuckX

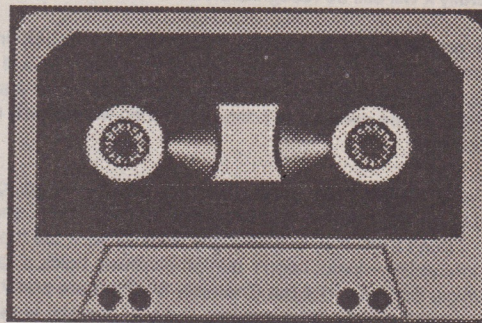
THE CRANKS - "Mei Dick" (114-20 Rockaway Blvd., Rockaway Beach NY 11694) The Cranks are at that awkward stage where their songwriting and skills have progressed above the so-bad-it's-cool school of bargain-basement punk, but not quite to the point where anything they do is going to make you throw away your Ramones records and spraypaint CRANKS on your leather jacket. For a trio, the band manages a very full sound, with clever arrangements and lots of harmony vocals. The problem is that they're so tight and well-rehearsed that the music borders on slick, and that's never good for punk. Songs like "I Have Not Yet Begun To Drink" suggest a gonzo spirit that should be nurtured. A little more anarchy might be the way to go. - Jim T.

DEAD THIRTEEN - "Psalm of The 2nd Roaming Crown" (58 Grace Street, Waterford NY 12188) This hardcore band isn't much for

solos or even riffs, but they do set up a varied and tight soundscape for their challenging lyrics in their six songs. It gets to the best in the title song, when the band moves from their formula of ambient guitar chords. Here, the members alternate between an altered voice and a whisper with words like, "Wings turn to razors, to discord all main veins..." - ChuckX

DOMAIN - "A New Level Of Unity" (5913 Kumquat Rd., W. Palm Beach FL 33413) Excellent melodic bass and gut-wrenching vocals spark this deathmetal demo, featuring Jersey Beat's own sultan of savagery, Phil Pinto, on drums and vocals. This is stomp your feet and swing your arms metal, eschewing speed for heaviness and intensity. All I have to say is, "AARRRRGGGHHH!!!!!" - Jim T.

ERIKSON (Jason, 322 Walnut Lane, Mt. Laurel NJ 08054) This sounds like a really young hardcore band who haven't quite gotten the hang of producing a demo yet. The vocals blare over this with the drums and guitars pushed way to the back of the mix. The music is aggressive hardcore while the lyrics - delivered in an offkey declamatory shout - can be pretty funny or wallow in typical adolescent angst. I bet the next demo rules, though. Inspirational verse:



TAPES

"Wanna be 14 again so I can be in my first band/ We'd call ourselves Abrasion and we'd be our only fans." - Jim T.

FANSHEN (Alex Wolff, 164 Burlington Ave, Spotswood NJ 08884) "Fanshen" is a Chinese word dating from the Revolution that means to turn over, as in a societal upheaval that rejects old superstitions and social mores for more enlightened beliefs. Not surprisingly, then, the music is fast, angry hardcore with a singer who spits out lyrics with the tortured fury of a man with a bayonet impaling his guts. Most of the songs, interestingly, deal with the personal rather than the political, with rage a central concern. One of those bands you probably need to see live to appreciate fully. - Jim T.

JUGGLING SUNS - 3 song demo (Crazed Management, PO Box 779, New Hope PA 18938) Hippie dipple Deadhead guitar noodling, with reedy lyrics and long guitar jams. These three songs are from the band's forthcoming full-length CD on Hydroponics Records, which I will probably not be purchasing unless I develop a chronic marijuana dependency between now and its release. - Jim T.

KUNG-PAO (636 E. 14th Street #1, NYC 10009) Heavy bands seem to be making a comeback. Kung-Pao swagger and pound riffs like Soundgarden with a little extra distortion on the guitars. The guttural, sneering vocals add a distinctive touch of venom. Head-banger rock for college graduates. - Jim T.

LOWLIFE - "All Fired Up" (41 Ailsa House, Thorpe Edge, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD10 9ND ENGLAND) Oi! Oi Oi! Oi!!! Limey punks who know how to barrel through a tune guitars ablaze. Take no prisoners punk with a beercore edge. If they lived here, they'd be on Headache Records and playing the Continental once a month. - Jim T.

MUSHMOUTH - "Demo '97" (PO Box 6871, Wyomissing PA 19610; email skywarp69@aol.com) Balls to the mat Hardcore with a capital H from Reading, PA - vocals screamed in a psychotic roar, guitars a thrashy blur, pounding dreams, and unrelenting aggression. Mosh or die. - Jim T.

THE RABID GARBAGEMEN - "Compared To Muddy Waters, We Suck Bad" (Turd Bird Music) This demo dates back a year but we just found out about this wacky bunch of South Jersey noise junkies. Think Beck with an even more wicked sense of humor - answering machine tapes, distortion, hip hop beats, rock guitar, and lots of feedback pasted together on hipster odes of slacker living like "Drunk & Dyslexic" and "Pizza & Beer." Lots of fun and it'll bend your mind a bit too.

SEAMS TO BE - "The Space Monster Cometh" (Adam "Emo" Kriney, 199 Branchport Ave., Long Branch NJ 07740) Seams To Be is the two-man team of Brett Wintle and Adam Kirney, who trade off on guitar, bass, drums, and vocals. It sounds like a band to me - playing melodic emo punk (as opposed to the metal or math-rock varieties). This is basically bouncy guitar chug in the Jaw-breaker vein, although times the guys get a bit goofy at times - which is actually a nice change of pace from the glut of overly serious punk bands around nowadays.

SOLACE (PO Box 267, Island H's NJ 08732) On this new 3-song demo, these Jersey shore headbangers rage through two angsty sludge-metal tracks, adding just a taste of Monster Magnet-styled post-psychedelic guitar swirl. It's all heavy as fuck; Sabbath-heads will love it. "Theme For The Apocalypse" is something else again, an extended freeform psychedelic noise jam that probably requires drugs (or, at the very least, a laser light show in a planetarium) to appreciate properly. - Jim T.

THE SWIMMIES (contact: 973 838-4393) A frolicsome and altogether delightful demo by a talented three-piece, fronted by a girl named Carla whose bouncy, girlish voice and impressive guitar chops propel these bubbly tracks. Imagine a happier Juliana Hatfield with the same coquettish vocals, intriguing lyrics and sonic guitar excursions and you start to get the picture. Once they get a little more comfortable on stage, this band is going to be dangerous. - Jim T.

TOMMYROT - 4-song demo (Kim Matthews, 3230 Camden Circle, Wilmington NC 28403) Two guys on guitar, keyboards, and bass, and a gal on drums. Don't get Tommyrot confused with the Carpenters, though; this is Nineties jangle-pop, at its best when they crank

up the tempos and pump a little energy into the mix.

UNCLENCH - "Araby" (Steven DiSebastian,) I hesitate to use that new-jack term Power Violence Hardcore, since I know this band and they wouldn't hurt a fly. But the music certain packs a punch - hard, heavy, powerful hardcore with Steven DiSebastian's rabid vocals and pounding drums that drive these five brutal tracks with the unstoppable urgency of a semi barreling down a steep road with bad brakes. - Jim T.

COMPILATIONS

BUDA BOOTLEG, VOL. 1 and 2 (Hedgehog Records, 2 Draeger Place, South River NJ 08882) Thanks to Andy Gesner and Mike Doktorski, the Budapest Cocktail Lounge in New Brunswick NJ has been transformed from a seedy neighborhood bar in a decaying Hungarian neighborhood into the town's coolest new nightspot. Several times a week, the best local bands - as well as a few from around the state - take over the Budapest and turn it into a rock club. And at every show, someone tapes the bands on a little handheld Walkman at the back of the room. These two compilations collect those "bootleg" live recordings, and surprisingly, the sound isn't half bad. Each tape presents one song by about 14 different bands, from old-timers like the Blisters and Tiny Lights to the most popular bands in town (Bionic Rhoda, Boss Jim Gettys, Evelyn Forever) to young, up and coming groups. And some of the tracks - like Wake Ooloo rampaging through the Feelies "Crazy Rhythms" or the New Tellers channeling the spirit of the Modern Lovers n "Pablo Picasso" - will give you goosebumps. It's a terrific way to sample the bustling New Brunswick (or Brunfuss, as the natives say) band scene one song at a time for just \$6 a tape (or \$10 for the pair). - Jim T.



Unclench

Photo by Jim Testa

PAWN (Opulence, PO Box 2071, Wilmington NC 28402) There are two great things about these Opulence compilations: First, they showcase worthy underground bands, some that record for Opulence (from the poppy Tricky The Cosmonaut to the raunchy Tex Svengali to the lethally heavy Spite) and others that the Opulence folks run across by trading tapes. Secondly, the tapes are free - just write and ask for one. Recommended cuts this time around come from Wilmington's Rodeo Boy, NYC's Sidedoor Johnnies and Jenifer Convertible, Chicago's Mil Mulliganos, and South Jersey's Unclench (all W.E. Festival veterans, by the way.) - Jim T.

Deconstruction will not be read this issue as its normal diatribe of epistemological speculations, lofty ideas of transcendence, implications of audio revolutionary frequencies, and cultural class consciousness theories of underground musical artists and their experimentation. In short: the author will not be full of himself. At present, large academic projects find me fulfilling obligations to the educational system. The time involved in these matters has reached the point of bypassing the microwave when preparing frozen meals and, as you will note here, performing heinous injustices in the sphere of artistic critiques. Many apologies go out to the accustomed reader, the artists, and the labels. The following are my choice picks for this castrated installment of **deconstruction**:

FLOWCHART - Cumulus Mood Twang (Carrot Top Records, 935 W. Chestnut, Suite LL15, Chicago, IL 60622) Not to disappoint those looking for that dreamy/surreal analog ambience, Sean O'Neil delivers 8 synthetic pieces that will have you drifting as languidly as listening to Eno in the bathtub. Sean has formerly recorded under the name, 'Heroine.'

JUDI BARI - Who Bombed Judi Bari? (Alternative Tentacles) Thanks to those politically minded folks at A.T., you now have no excuse not to know of the struggles of Judi Bari and the Earth First organization. *Who Bombed Judi Bari?* contains dozens of her motivating and enlightening speeches as well as some political song and dance numbers. If you chase freedom and you have an idea what it's like to feel human in the U.S., pick this one up. Judi's messages are still as inspirational and relevant as they were in the heat of her struggles.

NUZION BIG BAND - Hallelujah! (Third Eye Records, 1653 Mclendon Ave., Atlanta, GA 30307) Experimental, avant-garde jazz that's sure not to disappoint lovers of Smegma, John Zorn, or Zappa.

THE MOOG COOKBOOK - Plays the Classic Rock Hits (Restless Records, <http://www.restless.com>) A collection of 10 classic rock favorites all performed on the ancient Moog synthesizer. A new dimension in quirky. Some of the hits include; Born To Be Wild, Cat Scratch Fever, Whole Lotta Love, Ziggy Stardust, ... you're really not going to believe this!

FLUX - Protoplasmic (Release Records, P.O. Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551, <http://www.Relapse.com>) Flux is the name of James Plotkin's campaign for cerebral guitar redundancy (formerly called OLD). Manipulating guitar overdubs, toying with beats, and the overall assimilation of audio ambience with vocals by James and artist Ruth Collins, relinquishes a dense, yet crystal clear vision that rebukes time. Outer space, meet rock-n-roll sensibility.

NAMANAX - Audiotronic (Release Records) On the surface Audiotronic, the follow-up to last year's *Cascading Waves of Electronic Turbulence*, finds Namanax a bit more subdued in their noise therapy. A closer listen, however, reveals that these electronic meanderings elicit hordes of psychic frequencies in minimal, subtle packages that easily breath life into titles like: "The Return of the Deadly Mantis," "Tomb of the Seagull," and "Giggling Winds." A

great parade through alien landscapes via the wonders of noise, tone, and repetition. Fun and excitement kids, grab your things and head for safety!

SUBARACHNOID SPACE - Almost Invisible (Release Records) Psychedelic space rock with no vocals (so you can bring your own head). Not unlike Hawkwind in their 23rd minute of any of their songs. Most of this stuff could be interpreted as a little 'dark,' so keep out of reach of children. Get this one for your next floor party. Ahoy Ulysses! I think we're coming up on an ear canal!

SOLARUS - Empty Nature (Release Records) An ambient mix of loops, dub bass, guitar melodies, ethereal percussion, and synthesizers. *Empty Nature* rides an interesting line between a trance conducive pastiche of audio stimulation and, due to the prominent 'club' beat, a mildly interesting background soundtrack. Fortunately, the shift between the two does not occur *in media res*, so it is possible to tailor your desired experience. Good stuff for the ambient drone prone.

SCUMTRON: A Tribute To Merzbow (Blast First) Masami Akita's 'fetish of noise' has come full circle with this, his first ever tribute album. From being inspired by electronic musicians to instilling vision in others, Akita has put noise in the annals of music history. The textuality and ideology of Merzbow is reproduced here by Panasonic, Autechre, Jim O'Rourke, Bernhard Gunter, Russel Haswell, and as any self gratifying artist would have it, Akita himself. Being a Merzbow fan, I enjoy this noisy homage. I can say, however, that it is impossible for me to detect the slightest nuance of personal interpretation by any of the artists on this album. Akita, of course, excluded. Perhaps that is the nature of the genre or perhaps an advanced course in noisology is required. Either way, if you dig the barrage of Merzbowian sputters, squeals, and boms, this is a great catch.

ONEIDA - A Place Called El Shadai's (Turnbuckle Records, 163 3rd Ave. #435, New York, NY 10003) A great experimental collection of feedback, mumbling, improv-ish structures, and melodic (sometimes dissonant) pop tunes. These guys constantly sound like their about to fall to pieces. ... well, and sometimes they do. Brings to mind some Lee Renaldo solo work and good ol' Mr. Zorn.

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deconstruction

by Gregory S. Matherly



them's skankin' words!

by Chuck X Wharton

Skankers, They Are A-Changin'

Do you meet other cultures peacefully at ska concerts? Or do you clash with them?

I heard one concertgoer, a longtime follower of ska-core acts like the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, complain that his oppressors had started showing up at *his* concerts. Captains of football teams and their fashion-doll girlfriends. Future police chiefs. Young Republicans. Apprentice television evangelists. Ever gradually and in increasing numbers, they enter the doors to ska concerts because their strictly programmed pop radio stations insert a few ska-influenced (or even real ska) tunes onto the playlist.

With ska-punk's advent, unsuspecting skankers have watched in horror as mosh pits developed at their concerts. The football team captains and their fashionable dates might make fun of skankers because they don't understand the dance. Or deciding the skank is the next stop on their trendy trainline, they befoul the dance floor with their novice efforts. Ska's once exclusive playground endures further invasions as more ska bands are pushed into the popular arena. Frequent mention of ska and bands under the influence of skanking appears in the popular media. October's *Request* magazine - the mainstream music mag published by the Sam Goody record-store chain - mentions Rob "Bucket" Hingley, of the Toasters and Moon Ska Records - calling him one of 25 Indie Rock people you should know. The Toasters have a record reviewed this issue of *Jersey Beat*.

That same *Request* issue names Minneapolis' the Jinkies as one of nine indie bands that matter. Among many other records they appear on, the band's entry on the compilation, *Ska Down Her Way: The Women of Ska* is reviewed in *Jersey Beat* #60.

In fact, some ska musicians at times get mainstream coverage previously afforded only in devotees' DIY zines - magazines such as August's *A.P. (Alternative Press)* and the September/October issue of *Drum!*. After *Drum!* spoke far too lovingly of No Doubt's success and what it must mean to the genre, there was a surprisingly well-detailed sidebar and picture of Lloyd Knib. The feature told how he and Clement Dodd developed the ska beat from the African burra drumming of early Rastafarians. From the bands' perspective, as reported in *A.P.*, the results have also been challenging. Especially in ska-punk, the article's focus. "We found we were more accepted playing punk shows," Buck-O-Nine bassist Scott Kennerly tells Chris Nickson. "They were more open than the ska people." "If we play to a real ska crowd, the audience isn't into us as much as if we play a punk show," adds Suicide Machines' drummer Derek Grant.

Although I didn't question drummers and bassists, I checked with two ska trumpet players who reported few concert problems, although they acknowledged an evolving audience. "Our crowds seem to be made up of mostly college and high school kids," reports Jesse

Farber of Skavoovie and the Epitones, whose latest record, *Ripe*, is reviewed in this issue. His opinions are his own and don't necessarily represent the entire band. "It's a mix of rudies, skins, punks, skater kids.... There's certainly more of a punk aesthetic to our crowds than there were when we started. But back then the crowds were slightly older and had maybe a more longtime commitment to ska. Those people seem to be gone. Not that today's fans aren't into the music as much, I just mean that you don't have to be in a scooter club now to have heard of us."

Jesse Miner of the Jinkies reports experiences opposite those of the *A.P.* interviewees. The Minneapolis-St. Paul trumpeter also adds that his opinions are his own and not necessarily other band members'. "I would say that we find more acceptance among ska audiences over punk audiences," he says. "It seems to be the case here in the Twin Cities that there is a huge rift that has developed between the ska and punk communities over the past few years. I don't see a real reason for this division. Of course, there are punk rockers who do dig ska and who do go to shows, but that doesn't seem to be the trend with the majority of local punk rockers. "Currently, our audience is being made up of kids more into alternative music in general, with bands like Reel Big Fish, the Mighty Mighty Bosstones...the alternative kids have been loving ska. We've seen increased crowds. I think it's cool."

Miner added that the punk rift disappoints him and he misses playing with punk bands in the DIY circuit. His old band, Ten Cent Fun, played almost exclusively in basements with punkers.

"The punks that do come to the shows now are totally cool. There's never any real problems there. I don't really see a clash between the ska and alternative audiences. Both seem to groove well together. I guess that would also partially be due to the fact that most of the ska scene here is quite young to begin with. There isn't much of a divider between the two.

"Most of the old-school ska fans rarely come out to the gigs. When they do, it's for big bands the Toasters. That is the only crowd that might have a problem with the alternative crowd. But since they come out so infrequently, there isn't really a clash."

So the reports I get are alternatively happy and grave. I've mostly heard aggravation expressed as new audiences grasp how good ska is while new branches sprout on ska's vine. I haven't observed any problems as serious as have developed between the secular- and Christian-reggae bands and some devotees of Rastafarian reggae.



The originals are very protective of the Rastafarian content in their music and reserve strong criticism of the mostly secular North American or European bands like England's UB40, or Christians like America's Christafari. After its birth in Jamaica, I believe ska has demonstrated a life of its own. It's survived several waves in Europe and North America. Just November 10 on BBC's radio world news, commentators report that even in Argentina, airwaves have been flooded with Caribbean-styled music, much of it homegrown. Record sales of ska, dancehall and other forms command more than one-third the total and have edged tango's stronghold. I think of ska as a grapevine with branches going off in many directions - swing, jazz, funk and punk. We may take the grapes, but the vine remains independent of us and our trends. What we make with the grapes may differ. But as long as we all nurture the vine and never let it die, we'll always have something to harvest.

Reviews

The Allstonians - *The Allston Beat* (Moon Ska) The widely renowned Allstonians, who have put their Massachusetts town on the map, offer a signature selection with their cover song on the first of this 15-track album. But the most engaging ska sound here is the all-instrumental *Doctor Che Guevara*, written by alto-sax/flute player Jeremy Woodruff, which combines their own definitive sound with Latin influences. A casual listen to this record might make you think these guys just deliver cleanly-rendered, well-written ska, but this work is incredibly deeper than that. *Brighton Memories*, played for several non-ska-listening test subjects of mine, delivered new devotees of our music out their tonal-cocoons.

The Articles - *Flip F'real* (Moon Ska) Here we have 14 dedicated ska-jazz selections, all instrumental, with lots of outstanding horn solos from Derek Phelps, trumpet, Mike Rehfus, alto sax and Sean Stillwell, tenor sax. That's not to mention a group of guests from the Detroit scene. The tracks are consistently laced with a sound like classic Brazilian or Spanish jazz, especially *Starsky*, penned by drummer Dan Margulis and anchored by Dave Holle's upright piano,

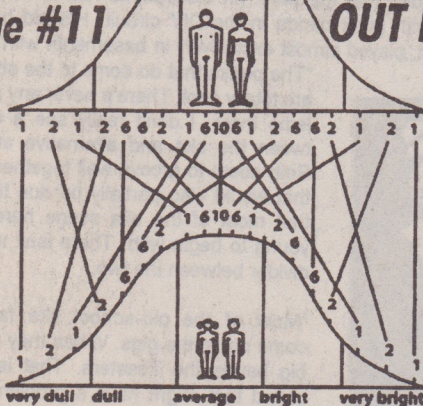
and *Sketches of Xzochi's* by Margulis and Derek Phelps. Phelps goes way, way out there on the trumpet, to be joined by the saxes. You'll also find hot treatments of compositions by Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Laurel Aitken and all the Skatalites.

Lloyd Brevett and the Skatalites - *African Roots* (Moon Ska) Producer Noah Wildman has combed archival recordings from Jamaican ska gemhouses such as Treasure Isle and King Tubby's for this offering from the man whose bass could make 10-cent garage sale speakers nearly boom like sub-woofers. Brevett wrote 13 of these 14 selections. He produced and arranged most of them, for quite a first-wave ska party as the third volume of Moon's Ska Authentic series. Many meditative instrumentals highlight this album. Understand, you have to meditate during persistent working on African drums. You get two shots to enjoy the sentimental saxophone work on *Candle Light*, which is one of two pieces paired with a dub. The other, *Fugitive*, is a furious rhythm jazz piece led by Tommy McCook on flute. You can get lost in the Rastafarian imagery of *African Roots* with vocalization by Tony Brevett. Besides the archival bonus tracks from Treasure Isle, you'll have a lot of fun with the loud horn chorus on *Herb Challis*. So dust off those garage sale speakers and let Lloyd Brevett give them their shot at glory.

Cherry Poppin' Daddies - *Zoot Suit Riot* (Mojo) Steve Perry leads this group of songs that swing rather than skank. But they are so good the faithful have grafted the band onto a branch of ska's tree. If you want a textbook-example of a swing-era effect, let's say scat-singing, you'll find it on this album. The record starts and finishes with plenty of drumming, especially on *The Ding-Dong Daddy of the D-Car Line* with Brian West. A touch of Dixieland jazz blows out on *When I Change Your Mind*. The First Church of Sinatra joins in *Come Back To Me*. The Daddies stop the classic ballroom dance get serious for one selection, *Drunk Daddy*, that chillingly explores the legacy of child abuse on top of wailing horns and pounding ivories, "I'm the top hat Devil's son/I got the luck of the drunk, try an' nail me/I'm the bullseye - aim your gun." If you're

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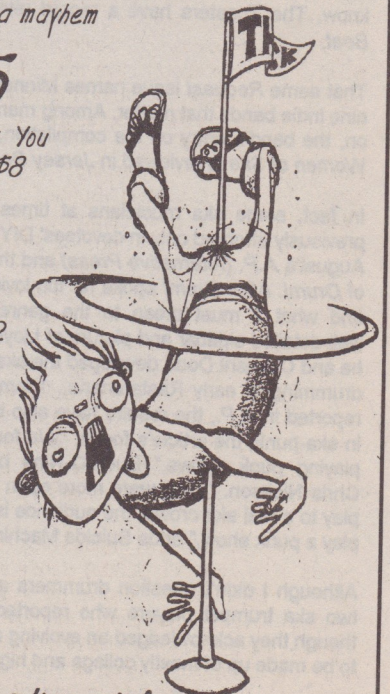
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already a Daddies collector, you'll find four previously unreleased songs here, including the title.

Cousin Oliver - (818) (Drive Thru Records, PO Box 461115, Hollywood CA 90046) Here's a snotty ska-metal punk band that tells you to put up your hands before telling you to pick up and sings songs like *Shot My Boss*, "But you've got a couple of alternatives/Go away quietly or set yourself Free/Top of the World Ma." And *Rock Star*, "You give all of us a ready bad name, rock star toilet paper." The best guitar work comes in *Chuck*, a surprising calypso-influenced entry, with pleasant saxophone and trombone work. We are invited to settle back and enjoy, "I got some change in the palm of my hand and that's not so bad..." until the guitarists hit the pedals for the bridge, "I feel like a big-headed kid dressed in a yellow jagged black stripe tee/went up to kick the ball but some bitch pulled it away from me." *Valentine's Day* is a 1960s-type ballad, where the guitars hold back for as long as they can, then it's stomp the distortion pedal and away they go. Cuz gives us striking contrasts in every song. One moment you're moving toward ska nirvana, then they pour the gasoline and light you afire. But it's fun.

Dean Fraser - *Big Up* (Island Jamaica Jazz) This saxophone great rotates other Caribbean-connected musicians through these 10 tracks. They maintain consistently Caribbean rhythms in these instrumental numbers, while alternating contemporary and traditional styles on the solos. They emphasize acoustic instruments. Their performance commands attention on pieces such as *Natty Never Get Weary*, *None A Jah Jah Children No Cry* and the re-working of Curtis Mayfield's *Queen of the Minstrels* as *Minstrel and Queen*. But it's Larry McDonald's nyabingi drumming that keeps me coming back.

The Hippos - *Forget The World* (Stiffdog Records, PO Box 982, San Pedro CA 90733) The guys turn in 11 songs filled with solid ska-punk. There's another dimension here of extra percussion. I mean, you haven't so much bongo drumming since your grandparents played Preston Epps' *Bongo Rock* record for you. They really show their stuff, from song-writing to execution, in *Please*. "The CHP likes to pick on me. They've got no sympathy. They're nothing but fat redneck swine." California's highway patrolmen probably have the CD case picture of the Hippo van up on their bulletin boards. Time for a paint job, fellows!

Home Grown - *Wusappaning?!* (PO Box 1621, Burbank, CA 91507/Burning Heart) The band puts out straightforward guitar punk with some ska offerings on this five-song record. Just play it three times and you've got a 15-track extra-long playing album. You won't miss the horns on *We Are Dumb* and *Face In The Crowd*. The latter song is especially good, "If I was a rock star, they would notice me and they would want my autograph./I'd have a video on MTV and I'd be signed on Epitaph." The punk cuts are well-executed, so you shouldn't feel guilty about wandering from the ska. Several Growners work the microphone, so you get a variety of vocals with the variety of musical styles.

The Impossibles - *The Impossibles* (Fueled By Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville FL 32604) Here's a ska-punk entry from Texas' music capital, Austin. You've got your snotty vocals, alternating guitar-picking and distortion. The most complicated moment on the record comes with *Always Have, Always Will*, which almost qualifies as an emo moment. "I sleep as much as I can and hold my heart in my hand. It's as much as I can stand/my weakness comes out once

again." Excellent bass work and a mature songwriting effort. The only horn work on the record comes on *Everyday* when guitarist Gabe drops his ax for a trombone. He does an admirable job and the arrangement's not bad, either.

Inspector 7 - *The Infamous* (Radical Records) The third wave of ska is here, but second-wave style isn't gone forever and I'm glad. Giuseppe Mancini hollers so good and whirls those ratchets. It's great. This band has the gift of synergy in taking simple lyrics and chord progressions and making great stuff out of them. Where words might fail, the music takes over and vice versa. Some songs get wordy, like *Sleeping With The Enemy*, "You're just a slag, you're just a traitor, a spineless scum, a mindless hater. Don't come around here no more. We don't like your kind you Nazi baller." Other than the instrumentals, some have few words and Inspector 7 members give it all even when they're goofy, like *Popeye*, "Popeye! Pick it up! Olive Oil! Pick it up! Sweet'Pea! Pick it up!" The wildest instrumental is also the simplest, *The Shape*, which puts you in a horror movie, complete with Giuseppe's maniacal laughter.

Johnny Too Bad And The Strikeouts - *Stereo E.P.* (Sike Records, PO Box 1054, Holyoke MA 01041-2104) Excellent trombone stylings of Mara Breen add dimension to the four songs on seven-inch vinyl, especially Side A's *Foresight*. The best arrangement is on the other side, *Wait 'til Later*, which features excellent chord-weaving among the horns with the guitar. Look for the street sign and the scooters on the front.

Kemuri - *Little Playmate* (Roadrunner) These aren't Japanese pretenders to ska-punk. Their 14 tracks, one of which is sung in Japanese, move cleanly through jolting horn riffs and jangling guitar upbeats to a smoking conclusion. Which is good; because Kemuri



means smoke in Japanese. Fumio Ito handles the lyrics, as well as vocals, spelled by T Tanaka's competent guitar solos. The best arrangement comes in a tune called *Prayer*, "No time to cry, why don't we try prayer in the battlefield named peace?" At the time of this review, the band was working out some kind of strange immigration problem so they could do an extended tour of the states. Until then, this record proves they have the ingredients for great ska-punk - talent, good arrangements, together horns, loud drums and a fresh nine-volt battery for the lead's distortion pedal.

Knuckle Sandwich - *The Crippler* (Sike Records, 553 Cooley St., Springfield MA 01128) Not an abundance of ska here. One of the band's missions is to combine ska with gothic - calling it skathic.

The most familiar ground for ska-lovers must be the skathic entry, *Shotgun With My Name*, written by lead guitarist Eric Poulin. This song contains spooky chord progressions, further shrouded in horns. "I'm gonna drink until I think my name is Dave....Maybe I'll find a shotgun with my name." Other selections are pretty good, but travel over ground unfamiliar to my ska-seeking ears. The standout among these numbers is *Western Mass Community Fight Song (For Ben Schooffield)* written by guitarist/vocalist Jeremy Smith. This tune uses the rhythm popularized by Bo Diddley and deals with subjects including police action and the poor. "The cops in Southampton are just plain mean. Whatcha gonna do when it happens to you? No need for guns. We're just having fun." No ska mother lode here, but some intriguing numbers.

Los Hooligans - *Traditions* (Moon Ska) I always admire a ska band rooted in tradition that isn't afraid to cover an old standard. Los Hooligans covers two with spirit for this album, *The Lady in Red* and Meredith Willson's *Till There Was You*. Both are seasoned with the band's frequent Latin styling, thanks to trumpeter Tony Luna's arrangements and anchoring by the solid percussion of Gus Gomez and bass of Jenny Surabian. In a number written by Luna, *Swing Right Rudie*, the group ventures from Latin-laced music and offers a wild ska-swing ride, first driven by Benny Torres' alto-saxophone and then by Erik Dewhirst's trombone and a hat mute. Torres and Dewhirst also show their composing talents on the album. Several tracks show strong roots-ska influence, meaning Skatalites, such as Luna's *Stephanie*. The most unique piece is one of the instrumentals, *Area 51*, that hints at some surf-music influence, including whammy-bar work from guitarist Gary Gerloff, who co-wrote the song. Good writing, singing and playing on this one, but make sure you don't miss the CD booklet, where there's a hilarious high school yearbook parody.

Mad Caddies - *Quality Soft Core* (Honest Don's Hardly Rude Recordings, PO Box 192027 San Francisco CA 94119) The Cad-dies' recording starts off innocently enough, as ska goes, with *I'm So Alone*, the first of 13 songs. Gradually, here come the heralding horns and then the distorted guitar. Before we're through, not only are we hit with bursts of hardcore-influenced ska, or ska-core, but singer Horovitz has achieved rapid-fire, finely-enunciated delivery of lyrics that I thought could only be rendered by the singer of Quincy Punx. Another following the Caddies' explosive style, *Preppie Girl*, starts and ends as a soft 1960s, but not before boiling into a ska-punk tune with a hardcore bridge. Another ballad, *Crew Cut Chuck*, tells a story of some gigs that got rough and out of control, but the amazing thing is that the song is country-ska - this really works - with a punk-rock bridge. Amazing piece of work. Finely, on an album full of punk-positive ska balladry, *Distress* is a formula-ska number, cleanly rendered, that should pass purists' tests. These guys have a lot of fun, play loud and know their stuff.

Mento Buru - *No Dancing Please* (Moon Ska) I don't know what this band's fans were looking for, but some expressed surprise to me at the mellowness of this record. The selections range from poppy to ultra-mellow, with outstanding percussion throughout. The rhythms include swing, rock, blues-funk and Spanish. While most everyone likes instrumental selections like *Beer Song*, with its Spanish percussion, Caribbean horns, jumping bassline and rich trombone solo, I think the mellow points of the record work best. *Streets of Gold* puts me on the beach without a cent to my name, but thankful for life and health. "I sit here waiting, patiently waiting, hoping for opportunity/And so I say good fortune is upon me but never comes my way." There's the best and laziest jazzy piano solo I've heard. Another mellow mood comes with *Skabolerio*, led, again, by Dennis Hamm's piano, rich chorus and Scott Thompson on flute. This one reluctantly leads me from the beach to a thick forest, just inside the tree line. That's fine, as long as it's cool.

The Pietasters - *Willis* (Hellcat Records) This group rocks, rocks, rocks for over half 13 tracks. They even have a distorted bass in a

song. But they do find time to skank with some ska, rocksteady and reggae, for just under half the record's content. They even provide calypso on *Without You*, with writing credits across the Pietasters' board. It's lightning-fast and one of only a few tunes where vocalist Stephen Jackson probably didn't need throat lozenges. He really works the voice box hard on this record. The best rocksteady piece is *Ocean*, which allows Alan Makranczy to cut loose on the saxophone. The best reggae is *Higher*, a tale of breaking up a relationship. Cover fans need to note there are several here, especially *Time Won't Let Me*.

Ernest Ranglin - *Memories of Barber Mack* (Island Jamaica Jazz) Rich and delicate arrangements fill out the eight selections on this jazz record, named for a saxophone player devoted to mento, the traditional source for sounds like ska and reggae. The guitarist, credited with inventing ska's guitar sound and first artist ever signed to Island, works with and contrasts with the players in his quintet, picking and strumming through the instrumentals with his patented precision and soul. For a jazz album, the arrangements happily gravitate toward rhythms in the Caribbean tradition, including calypso. This is especially true on *Blue Mountains*. Ranglin, who produced the record, shows he's not opposed to evolution in music with the tune *Dancehall Fever*, with a clipped set of upbeat and guitar-playing that rockets up and down the frets with speed, but finesse.

Regatta 69 - *Prime Time* (Moon Ska) You'll need your scissors to get the most out of this recording, as an activity is included, designed by keyboardist Jason Priebe. You might get by with a knife, but please be careful. As for the sounds on this recording, this solid band offers something that, maybe unintentionally, melds their ska with that mid-1960s sound the progressive bands had just prior to going underground. This is due to the stylings of bassist-vocalist Brian Hill and keyboardist Priebe, and comes out strongest in tracks like *Operation Time Control* and especially *Fly, Fly Away* - "Now he wants her more than ever/She really knows how to pull his lever/He invites here for a ride/And he finds out she loves to fly away." You'll have the most fun with tracks like *I Wanna Smack You* and the wild dance composed by trombonist Drew Brown, *The Fiasco*. *Killer Cabbie* includes carnival ska and some fuzzy guitar. Did I mention these people cover *You Light Up My Life*?

The Scofflaws - *Live! Vol. 1* (Moon Ska) This could have been titled, *The Essential Cuts, Live!* Not a lot new here for Scofflaw's followers. But the band's mission of laying their performing energy down in audio, with no overdubs, has succeeded. Start with Tommy McCook's instrumental *Ska-La Parisian*, feature three of trombonist/vocalist Buford O'Sullivan's rhythmic hits, *Back Door Open*, *Nude Beach* and the absolutely necessary William Shatner. Some of Volume 1's 13 selections are what you expect from the band in each performance, *After The Lights* for example, but don't forget to look for Gerry Mulligan's *Bernie's Tune* featuring hot sax, trombone and guitar solos. Send Nancy Sinatra a copy of *Boots*. The entire performance is made solid, as expected, by Glen Saunders' electric upright bass, John Soldo on drums and Jennifer South, keyboards. Bring on Volume 2!

The Skatalites - *Ball of Fire* (Island Jamaica Jazz) The opening track of the James Bond Theme ought to arouse enough curiosity in followers of ska's first band. But the group, based in Brooklyn with a few new members, still works to please with their formula of theme, turn by turn on solos, reprise. So prepare your friends for the record, as you would for a concert. New and admirable recordings of their standards are here, such as *Latin Goes Ska* and *Eastern Standard Time*. After 30 years, ska's original fab four - Roland Alphonso, Lester Sterling, Lloyd Brevett and Lloyd Knibb - show on this recording they still love the music as much as we do. Besides the original and new members, Ernest Ranglin guests on guitar.

Skavoovie and the Epitones - *Ripe* (Moon Ska) This band takes us on a musical sea cruise, with lots of wave action from Eugene Cho's rich Hammond organ on many of the 14 tracks. The group has plenty of wind from five horns, including a euphonium and a guest baritone saxophone. But what listeners can expect nearly throughout the recording is full, smooth ska-jazz, often punctuated with vocalist Ansis Purins wanting you to, "Pick it up!" What's most amazing is that all the musicians can stay so tight and blended and then launch into individual orbit as they do in their horn and guitar solos in *Aquaman*. *Frog Spirit* offers some of the wildest lyrical imagery I've heard in ska. The group needs to get a Mardi Gras gig and feature the swing *Bli-Blip*. Don Drummond fans should note that *Riverboat* is a tribute to his *Green Island*.

The Skoidats - *The Times* (Moon Ska) Traditional skins do it best. I'm speaking of the song *Moonstomp* '97 and this band, which treats us to their culture, music and excellent horn solos through 14 tracks. Symarip, whose original Jamaican *Skinhead Moonstomp* gets credited in the song. "Twenty-eight years and three million miles later, we're still stomping." *Alone* offers the most complex arrangement, horns, tempos, bass and rhythm. *Whirlwind* shows off the advanced percussion techniques of Gardner Dunn, not too mention a fantastic winding chord progression for the horns, plus sax solo. With great restraint, there is only one track dedicated exclusively to beer: *Beer, Beer, Beer*. Plus - Moon Ska's signature hidden track. You may never want to take your boots off.

The Slackers - *Redlight* (Hellcat) Here's your chance to own a classic. The very first Latin-goes-ska instrumental track of this record transports me to an imaginary Treasure Isle recording session, live. It's *Cooking For Tommy*, dedicated to Skatalites' tenor saxophonist Tommy McCook. It's not bad when they sing, either. *Soldier* speaks in rocksteady of our society's flirtation with police-statism by telling the jack-booted man how powerful he must feel with his stick, piece and flak-jacket. "They say that clothes maketh the man. Soldier, why you wear your pants so tight? Your boots so long? That shiny badge to make you strong." It's hard to believe how fine and meaningful this traditionally styled ska can be today. But here's your proof if you're ready to listen.

The Sprigs - Demo tape (Joe Grimm, PO Box 200191, New Haven CT 06520) This five-song, \$5 grouping alternates rootsy ska with the poppy and punky stuff - but resulting in the most ska-oriented ska-punk demo I've heard. The vocals play off bouncy Spanish-sounding horns and organ in arrangements written and performed by Joe. Where it gets most interesting is on "Spitting," which bridges the ska, featuring a 1960s-style tremelo guitar, after a hardcore opening. The big surprise is the excellent spoken word piece, "The Ten Commandments of Woman from Woman to Man," performed by Megan the Crusty Mod over a poppy ska melody. "Commandment No. 6, Thou shalt not dump me because I am too fat when you have a belly that is hiding a small Chihuahua." I think ska has a real deficit of spoken word pieces, unlike reggae, so here's one for the collection. Look for the legendary bat boy on the front.



Stubborn All-Stars - *Back With A New Batch* (Another Planet Records) Through most of their dozen tracks the band yields pure, soulful ska. The pace slows just enough to explore strife in *Tired of Struggling*. "And I feel so tired, tired of struggling and I feel so weary that I just want to lay down and die." The pace picks up enough to work with some New Orleans-style roots-rock in *Because of You*. *I Can't Touch You* could be sneaked onto a vintage rhythm and blues compilation. Another good batch of songs from King Django.



Supaflies - *Rambarded* (Fueled By Ramen) No record retains its ska-punk title while putting in more punk than this one. There're ballads to 40-ouncers and getting stuck alone in a room. The strangest song, *Ever Get That Urge*, celebrates hitting the road while providing an excellent forum for bassist Travis Guns to show his stuff. Guns also gets credit on the record for foot placement on monitors. "Everybody loves a winner so nobody loves me. It's the milk of human kindness so please don't misjudge me," from *Milk*. Ska doesn't get punker than this, by Louisiana's entry in the ska-punk race.

The Orange County Supertones - *Strike Back* (Bec Recordings, 810 3rd Ave. 20, Seattle WA 98104) The guys have the horns and loud, distorted guitar. They look two-tone. The vocals are good. They look two-tone. At some point folks will hear that this group is singing, not about drinking, not about Jah Rastafari, but about Christianity. As they sing in the oi-punk/ska offering *Perseverance of the Saints*, "I will be as stubborn as a pitbull, neutral as a Nazi, resolute like Ghandi. I will keep preaching till I'm took out." Some may avoid them and their records because of their zealotry. But the arrangements are good and the music testifies, if nothing else, that they're definitely not pretenders.

The Suspects - *How I Stop Worrying And Love The Ska* (PO Box 73441, Houston TX 77273-3441) These are the vanguard musicians who teach skanking to Houston's truck drivers, petro-chemical workers and big-haired barflies, as well as hipsters. Although they might get away with going through the ska motions in the fourth largest city in the U.S., this nine-song record shows the band continues to progress musically. Some songs that venture further into roots. Others fly further toward punk. One, *Pancho Villa*, builds on the band's southwestern roots with a horn arrangement laid in front of a classic ska organ-scape by Joe Cote. This proves that all those days and nights touring across America haven't taken Tex-Mex out of their musical hearts. *Goodbye Brown Eyes* demonstrates the signature fast-ballad that wins them fans, with a fine trombone solo by Hunter Close.

The Toasters - *Don't Let The Bastards Grind You Down* (Moon Ska) A lot more fast ska for skanking comes from the band. It gets most interesting in *Today's A Good Day*, a jazzy and soulful number by drummer Jonnathan McCain. Things slow and the arrangement gets complicated for *Spooky Graveyard* by keyboardist Dave Barry and guitarist/vocalist Bucket Hingley. The song showcases for Chunk Faulkner on trombone and the muted trumpet of The Sledge. There's even some toasting. This band has to live up to its own great reputation. On this record, it does.

Compilations

Dancehall Queen (Island Jamaica) Jamaica's largest-grossing film ever yields songs that made the playlists of various college Caribbean music radio shows. Some of this would qualify as disco too

ever yields songs that made the playlists of various college Caribbean music radio shows. Some of this would qualify as disco to the North American ear. There's also some ska and reggae with much toasting, like *Joyride* by Wayne Wonder & Baby Cham. What binds these selections is the persistently hard digital percussion of today's island dancehall. Fans who may have given up dub years ago might risk new addiction here, with tracks like Beenie Man's *Nuff Gal* and his working of the movie theme with Chevelle Franklyn. The Marley Girls and Sugar Minott also appear with numerous others on the 12 tracks. High points are Buccaneer's *Badman Sonata* with an aria-theme from Verdi's *La Rigoletto*, plus the mystically percussive *Boof N' Baff N' Biff* by Black Uhuru.

Dancin' Mood (Triple Crown Records) This 13 song group starts off with a bang in the rootsy *Walk Away* by The Insteps. You'll have to stop dancing for a few moments during the short introduction of Mephiskapheles' rich *Attack of The Geniuses*. Another high comes in the instrumental *Thursday Night Stomp* by Dave Hillyard and the Rocksteady 7. It works on Saturday night, too. Also appearing: The Slackers, Ruder Than You, Inspector 7, B-3s, Stable Boys and Skinnerbox.

Island Vol. 1 1959-1964 Ska's The Limit (Island) Island Records decides to celebrate their 40th anniversary before 1999. That's fine. On this record dedicated to early ska, several influences present themselves starting with *Boogie In My Bones* by Laurel Aitkin. What excites me about this 20-track record are three things. Begin with the last track, *My Boy Lollipop* by Millie Small, which ensured there would be an Island Records. She also appears elsewhere in a duet with Ron Panton. If Doreen Shaffer of the Skatalites is ska's queen, and I know she is, then Millie Small is ska's eternal princess. Next check out the original *Penny Reel* by Eric Morris. And third, *Bank to Bank Part 1* by the Baba Brooks Band, which pulls from the ancient source of ska, the folk music mento, and a song *River to The Bank*. Sounding very young but ready for action are Robert Marley, *Judge Not* and Jimmy Cliff, *King of Kings*.

Land of The Rising Ska: The Best of Japanese Ska (Moon Ska) In case you haven't noticed, they're here. And Moon has a bunch of 'em, in a variety of ska flavors. The styles range in these dozen tracks from raw second wave, with Oi-Skall Mates in *Nutty Sound Oi-Skall Mates* to the easy island sound of Fruity's *S.A.G. to You* to the punky-ska sound of Snail Ramp in *Run Away*. Very interesting are the Blue Beat Players who achieve a tribute to the Treasure Isle-era with *Cool Ska*, and Determinations, who use *Lion Bite* to reflect 1960s artists like Symarip. I said there's a variety of music and unfortunately there's a variety of sound quality, as well. A few of the tracks sound like they were picked up directly from a flex-disc — one of those bendable vinyl records with no dynamic range that can be stapled into magazines. I think the ear should be forgiving of sound quality on vintage compilation records, but this record ain't vintage.

Oil Skampilation Vol. #3 (Radical Records) The record of a live performance where skins and skankers play together opens with the Dropkick Murphys, ska-fans' favorite non-ska band, hitting some opening ska-esque, then giving up one of their fine odes to the working stiffs, *Road of The Righteous*. If that weren't enough, Inspector 7, the Kingpins and Skabba the Hut also appear — 19 bands total, separately or together on 23 loud tracks. One big ska treat is Big Lick's *Way-O*, alternating between fast but traditional ska and fuzzy punk stuff. The Mob Town Beat offers *Beer* for skins and skankers, while Johnny Too Bad offers *The Cider Song* for those with a mind toward straight-edge liquids.

Ska Cover It Up! (Beloved Recordings) I frequently hear from ska fans who want a cover of the *Munsters* television theme. Others have one and want another. This 12 track collection has one by Insatiable would satisfy anyone's collection. And it's not even the high point. The Porkers' *Burnin' Love* opens the record with fanfare,



Mothermania

Photo by Jim Testa

followed by an admirable working of *The Midnight Hour* by the Toasters. Some of the covers work well naturally, like Undercover S.K.A.'s *Music To Watch Girls By* and Ruder Than You's *Misskaculation*, based on *Pipeline*. Others work surprisingly well, like the Blue Meanies' *Happy Together*, and Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*, woven into ska by Ruder Than You. Get your cover right here.

Ska Island (Island) This record company's celebrating their 40th anniversary a couple of years early and no one seems to mind. The 15 selections of Jamaican classics are all newly record. Some of the musicians, like Prince Buster and Ernest Ranglin, are first wave classics themselves. Others are second- and third-wavers. They're all mixed together at times. Prince Buster joins the Skatalites, who have a few new members, for his *King of Kings*. He hasn't lost the beat and neither has the Queen, Doreen Shaffer, on *Can't You See*. Fishbone draws *Crazy Bald Heads*, telling off some bad skinheads who turned the media against all skins. Fishbone wrings more soul out of this song than anyone ever knew could be there. Hepcat somehow nearly doubles the original time of *Penny Reel*. But it's good. The highest pint for me is Dr. Ring-Ding and The Senior Allstars working the hilarious puzzle-piece, *Shame & Scandal In The Family*. That's definitely one to keep.

This Is Ska Too! (Music Club) So many vintage ska collections. And all addictive. One high point here comes when Symarip calls for all skinheads to put boots on their feet and do the *Skinhead Moonstomp*. "I'm your boss skinhead speaking. You can see. Look on my foot." This is the piece referenced in The Skoidats' *Moonstomp '97*. You need to pop this on anyone who insists that all skinheads are the same as Nazis. More great times come with originals by the Upsetters, Baba Brooks, Duke Reid's Group and *Bonanza Ska* by Carlos Malcolm and the Afro-Caribs. I almost forgot to mention the Skatal-

ites and *Get Up Edina* by Desmond Dekker. Many fine moments and the sound quality is pretty good throughout.

Demos

Mothermania - Mothermania (741 Roseld Ave., Ocean NJ 07712) Here's the ska-punk power trio you ordered. On their nine-song demo, they sometimes provide audio clips to talk dirty to you. They occasionally punk out, but mainly stay the course of ska-power. One song emphasizes both styles, and is also the best arrangement, *Three Day Weekend*. They do a good emo cover in the Cure's *Boys Don't Cry*. Their weirdest effort is *Bike Thief*, which volleys into choruses of "Yi! Yi! Yi!" Outstanding demo.

The Royalties - Welcome to New Jersey (PO Box 363, Belle Mead NJ 08502) A two-song, seven-inch vinyl debut from the standard-bearers of New Jersey's ska people. *SSR DIY* is the only song I know specifically celebrating the culture nurturing both ska and punk music in America. This one, as well as the flip side's *Avoid The Crime* show the band grounded in Tracy's keyboard with the Hammond sound. Fine rootsy guitar from Mike also.

Taxicab Samurais - doggie treats (PO Box 1263, Maplewood NJ 07040) If you send \$4 for a recording from these ska-punks, you probably won't get the demo cassette I have, but a new seven-inch vinyl. I hope specifically to review that one next issue. As for this five-song wonder, the band flirts with ska-core stylings of groups such as the Voodoo Glow Skulls, using the sax, trumpet and trombone as another guitar. The closest of the five to move toward traditional ska is a good one, *What's Wrong*. This also serves as the best arrangement involving all musicians in the tight effort, plus giving bassist Dan Bannett a bit of a workout. Together performance.

Video

Dancehall Queen (Island Jamaica Films) All those weekend rudeboys and rudegirls you know who claim they command the Jamaican dialect can now be tested. This digitally shot movie features Jamaicans delivering rapid-fire 1990s patois through every tragic and comedic situation that can happen in the Kingston ghetto. Demand that your weekenders listen and translate because, unlike currently available editions of the 1970s Jamaican classic *The Harder They Come*, there are no subtitles in standard American English. And there's no place to hide, either for the characters or the viewers. The contemporary soundtrack, produced by Sly and Robbie, mostly showcases the hard dancehall sound popular on the island, with a little textbook-variety reggae and ska. While this provides a good beat, it offers little relief from the plot's tension. That tension is especially strong with a North American audience, where so many of us want to believe that poverty is a person's choice, rather than a cruel birthright. We want to believe civilization is so advanced that the desire to consume overrides the need to survive. We're offered few postcard-views of Kingston, instead focusing on street scenes. So the responsibility for holding us to the screen falls to the stars - Marcia, the single mother struggling to feed her family by selling Red Stripe beer on the street, and the evil gangster Priest, who terrorizes and controls Marcia's family. These Jamaican actors, Audrey Reid and Paul Campbell, powerfully bring this story to conclusion. Besides battling poverty, Marcia desperately develops the cunning she needs to overcome the criminals. In a world where moral choices are the privilege of people who can pay for them, she finds the Kingston dancehall

scene. Here, sexy, carnival-garbed queens can capture more than enough money to afford privileges and gain independence. The movie features major musical appearances by DJ Beenie Man and singer Chevelle Franklyn. Producer Carl Bradshaw, who appeared in the favorite Jamaican film of ska and reggae followers, *The Harder They Come*, appears as a policeman. He also helped outline the movie's story and get this project shot. And most importantly, the movie features lots of profoundly sensuous dancing by women who'll teach you what Jamaicans mean when they say she wines.

Zines

Idle Hands #3 (\$1 or three stamps, Idle Hands, 208 Inn Circle, Fountain Inn SC 29644) The publisher bills this as America's most widely circulated and beloved Rancid zine. In fact, the coverage of the band Rancid shoots into the red zone of obsessiveness in this thick, full-size photocopied zine. It's comprehensive coverage. And you may be the kind of ska fan who dislikes Rancid. That's OK.

There's also nice coverage of Auntie Christ, Dropkick Murphys, Pietasters and Union 13. But of course, the music stuff isn't the main reason I'm riveted to this book. It's the in-depth cover story, complete with pictures, in full tabloid-level credibility, of Kathie Lee Gifford's revenge-affair with Tim of Rancid. Man, oh man!

Moon Skazette (SASE and three first class stamps, Moon Ska Records, PO Box 1412 New York NY 10276) The last thing I expected to see on a record company's zine was a front pager praising another record company. But there it was, praising Island Records for their producing of the compilation, *Ska Island*. This zine also is your source for news of Moon Ska, the world's greatest ska storehouse. The price is nice. And the writing and graphics are hot, thanks to Moon employee Noah

Wildman, who also publishes another excellent work, *The People's Ska Annual*.

Nutz To That! #2 (\$2, Laszlo, 2928 NE Parvin Road, Kansas City MO 64117) Laszlo and crew put assemble original line drawings, reviews, interviews and personal items for this thick, quarter-size photocopied zine. The biggest attraction for me is diary of Daniel and Laszlo's Trip to Chicago. Stick-figure art highlights the low point of their trip, where hoodlums yelled, "Faggots!" and threw coins and tokens (???) at them. They did get to hear the Might Blue Kings in concert, which they loved, preceded by Frogpond, which they did not love. "Just our luck, we leave Kansas City and we see a shitty KC band in Chicago. Damn." Anybody can review records and zines. Laszlo and crew celebrate life's misery and joy. This is lively, funny zine.

You Go! #7 (\$1, 102 Serra Ct., Santa Cruz CA 95060) Publisher Ryan opens this quarter-size issue with a new newsprint format and a generous amount of half-tone photographs. Covered are ska, oil, punk and soul, featuring Siren Six and the Dropkick Murphys. Especially enlightening is the interview with Santa Cruz-based INCiters, who take inspiration from England's Northern Soul in their musical mission. They promise that all ska fans will find room in their repertoire for this music. Let's watch for more of this stuff.



The
Royalties

DANSE ASSEMBLY .beta. v3

Hey Ho! Hey Ho! - Well it looks like alot ov the "mainstream" have finally caught up with the style of music I've been covering in this column for what is it, Jim, 5 years now? ...Gheeze! Took Y'All long enough! Anyways here's a random overview ov thee current crop... read on & note our new direct address at the end ov thee column to send us all electro, Industrial & hey, we are now accepting applications for goth too!

ARKARNA "House On Fire" CD5 (Reprise)

A decent popified take on the new dNb electronicA sound. "House..." checks in exactly in between The Underworld & 8t's popsters The Three O'Clock, if you can imagine that! Cutesy, hi-6t's boy-vox sit nicely amid the sampled breakbeats & ocilators.

EC8OR - All Of Us Can Be Rich (DHR/Grand Royal)

Str8 outta the Atari Teenage Riot skool of snarly punk vox atop extremely speedy distorted break beats comes the all too similar sounds of "equator"(?) Hmmm... the biggest surprise here is that it's on the same label who actually release A.T.R. - which leaves us wondering: Why release 2 artists with the same EXACT sound? A bit confusing but not all that bad actually! (SHRED)

GODFLESH - Love & Hate In Dub (Earache)

The first few cuts on the "remix/in dub" cd release by guitar slingers GodFlesh, might just leave this group's, er... more "right wing" fans a bit cold. This is a good thing. The 'Flesh's gee-tar on-slaught is pitted against a boom-boom-CRUNCH hip-hop-on-dope drudge on the opener "Circle..." while "Almost Heaven" delves into the latest in drumNbass beats, all a bit urban for our normally "cracker" superheros. Like the liners say it's quite a 'deconstruction' of the material, but it is also a branching out & expanding ov their heavy & dark styles. Very worth checking out & into.

KMFDM - *%#@+ CD (WaxTrax/TVT)

Maybe it's all this industry talk of "electronicA" or maybe it's just dumbB luck, but just when you thought KMFDM were completely 'down & out,' a one trick pony, or just plain suck - this new "album formerly known as" plays as if they weren't the grandads in the electro scene that they are, but in fact are a new & energetic unit.... in a word: in-vigorated! After last years totally unimpressive waste of time "Xtort," on this there's so many well placed samples, breakbeats, electro-loops & actual song ideas amidst the synth majik; it's overly appropriate that their oft heard mantra has changed from "KMFDM: doin it again" to the nu & improved "KMFDM: better than the best."

This is a more electronic & modern KMFDM who sound as if they are in complete control ov their equipment, a big problem w/ last years Xtort, where the synths & samples just sounded arbitrary & undefined. Standout trax: "Unfit" is a masterpiece that perfectly blends the 303's w/ a (thankfully non-) metal heaviness... while "Mercy" sounds like the funky electro-pop-rock that SMG are constantly hovering near. The more I listen to this cd the more I like it - a welcomed comeback from a band that has been far too long just "going thru the motions"...!

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY - Technomajikal (Roir Int'l)

"Making FutureMusik For FutureChildren" - So sayeth LeePerry - sound like tribal-futurism? It Is! 11 trax of psychedelic danse musik from one of ragga's true originators... some ov these cuts will remind you to thee Psychick Warriors' earlier output on Kk records, with their house/tribal grooves & sitar experimentation. Very trippy & high energy stuff here, with the occasional nod to Yello's electro-Chug.

LOOP GURU - LoopBitesDog (WorldDomination)

What a strange, enjoyable trip this cd is. Simply put- if you like a bit ov

curry with your electronicA, a little tahini with your psychedelicA, add a lot ov flavour to your collection with this fine, fine, "listening" experience ov a release. I honestly can't imagine this stuff on a dancefloor, but it should be required "home"listening for the post-rave generation-E. Do get ! (SHRED)

MALACODA - Cascade (World Domination)

A deep boom helps bring us "Into the Fold" ov Malacoda - a dubby delight with distorted vox, samples & synth washes "Wahpollo," (that's Galore to you, kiddoes!) "Cascade" offers up a classick Eno-Fripp-like texture with ragga-infectious beats. "Dinner" adds a bit of house to make this one heck'uva worthy & diverse release.

PLANET RAMPANT- Volume 3 (Rampant/React)

Brilliantly beat-mixed by UK (via LA) Dj Brownie, this is one kickin' & trance-inducing release, G. Word! to your cousin...even. All tracks have got a dense, electro (- eclecticA?) vibe, but the standouts are definitely "Coast" by Sedona, "Sweet Drops" by The Violator, & "Disco Eruption" by Ascendance - all of whom feature one Paul Grogan, curiously enuff! A highly recommended comp! Seek it!

SHIZUO vs Shizor (DHR/Grand Royal)

Holly compression test, Batman!... the totally distorted intro on "Sweat" will definitely have you running to the volume control on your stereo - in vein, that is, as the attack of this disc aint to be "controlled." Impressive to say the least. dNb on 33RPM's meets Beasties styled grooves (hence the label connection?) The peaked meters return on "Braindead" & a more lovely distortion on drumtrax I've just never heard. "New Kick" is also a nifty nu take on the Daft-style & of all things reminds me to the Flying Lizards! Although, at times this cd is so heavy it makes some industrial sound like elevator muzak!!! A Must to own!

URBAL BEATS - Various (Polygram/ Urb)

From the absolutely fine West coast Rave-Hip-Hop-Techno mag URB comes this excellent compilation featuring allotta "electronicA's" key-players. I dunno if I'd go so far as to call this "The definitive guide to Electronic Music" as the comp's subtitle suggests... but it IS however, an amazing gathering of some of the best, er-"famous" artists in the genre, most ov whom have been here all along (before the "buzz" wurd, that's!) Not neciserially their best trax, but Prodigy, FSOL, Goldie, Orbital, Wink, & ETBTG are all represented here. The best reason I can think ov to pick this up is the convenience ov having all these excellent (mostly) album trax in one handy place.

.....DAMn! CHART:.....

9-Crystal Method- Vegas cd

8-Daft Punk - Homework cd

7-Colin Newman - Bastard cd

6-KMFDM - *%\$+ cd

5- MORTIS- fodt til a herske

4- tch- sinflower cd

3- proGREXiv-reOP cd

2- haujobb- solutions...cd

1- D!V!S!ON #9 -dubNbass:omenII

Ok, here's the deal: we moved our entire operations down to the shore after New Brunswick became one big Bennigans-A-Thon. I mean, Old Man Raferties & Stuff Your Face were one thing but with the Roxy closed & The Melody finally cancelling all it's "alternative" nights & going all-jock/ frat-Rock-All-the-time, we knew it was all over... it's ugly alright! We're still publishing the bi-monthly zine DAMn! however & if you at all Njoy the style covered in this column you'll really dig the mag: It's \$2. post paid to: DANSE ASSEMBLY MAGAZINE (Jersey Beat Offer) - PO Box 2321-Neptune City, NJ 07754 Oh & visit us onLine at: <http://users.aol.com/damnet>



Singer-songwriter Tris McCall joins the Jersey Beat staff this issue as our resident Anglophile, keeping an ear on the newest sounds from across the pond.

Sneaker Pimps – *Becoming X* (Virgin) - A new, modestly engaging trip-hop record which was all the rage for about twenty seconds this summer. (You probably missed it, but trust me, it happened; they had a song on one of those jerky sci-fi soundtracks which were supposed to break electronica and the new music in America.) Like most '97 joints, this one JsoundsJ great, and some of the music does remain engaging on repeat listens, but the Sneaker Pimps are crucially undercut by their clueless, generic singer, who sounds like an import from the Ten Thousand Maniacs factory. Trip-hop trades in traditional song-structure and complex melody (because chord changes are, I guess, uncool, trip-hop singers – even Tricky's Martine – are tethered to the five note blues scale) for sonic cohesion and ambience. It JcanJ work, but it seems to me that in order to make it happen, you unquestionably need a vocalist with a hell of a lot of character and commitment to working JwithJ, rather than against, the mood of the music. "Becoming X", whatever its merits, doesn't get close to that. ☺☺☺

Blur – *Blur* (Virgin) The overhyped distinction between Damon Albarn and Noel Gallagher basically comes down to this: Gallagher is such a jealous protector of his own legend as the songwriting messiah of the late 20th century that he is extra careful never to fuck it up by throwing lazy crap on his albums. The guy is too full of himself and his status as the psychic heir to John Lennon to ever drop something like "Chinese Bombs". And for that, I say -- thank God for Noel Gallagher. Thank you, God, for this inveterate, arrogant, piece of shit who has the balls to *care* and *sweat* over every note just so we all can get the legend right. ☺☺☺

Portishead – *Portishead* (Go!Beat) Beth Gibbons, on the other hand, practically defines trip-hop singing, and though I hated her flat, blase, euro-druggy intonation on "Dummy", even I had to admit that she'd come up with something cogent and instantly memorable. That said, I am pleasantly surprised by her decision to overhaul her vocal concept – and I give her big-time props for that. For those of you who have not yet subjected yourselves to "Portishead", Gibbons is now a vocal dead ringer for Grace Slick, or maybe Grace Slick doing Rodgers and Hammerstein. She sings through distortion and extreme limiters, and her willingness to allow the Voice that Made Portishead Famous to be transformed, and mutilated, is admirable. And "Portishead" is very well put together and imaginatively produced – but, hey, who are we kidding? most of these songs are just atrocious; shrill and unlistenable at best, laughable at worst. That won't deter Portishead's fan base – because, after all, nobody listens stuff like this for pleasure. They listen to it because for some reason (probably justified), it is a badge of hipness to put it on, grit your teeth, and plough your way through. I recommend everybody try it at least once. ☺☺

Dubstar – *Goodbye* (Polydor) More Henry Higgins dance music – this time, it is synth programmer (and, I suspect, frustrated singer-songwriter) Steve Hillier putting words and melodies into the mouth of the capable and characteristic Sarah Blackwood. The lyrics read like some straight married guy's estranged take on female frustration, and Blackwood strains valiantly to make them work. We're growing an odd crop of dance music this year – much of it has been fabricated by synth players who seem like they'd be much more comfortable banging out their songs on acoustic instruments with minimum



British Inversion

by tris mccall

accompaniment. But it's 1997, and you've got to be groovy, so the best route to the top of the charts is to find an engaging chick, shuffle pronouns a little, and simulate "Been Around The World". Dubstar is much better at this than most, and some of these tracks are magnificent confections. Still, perhaps because of the schizophrenic perspective, there's something fundamentally inconsequential about "Goodbye". Extremely comparable to Sleeper's "The It Girl", though it is by no means as consistently good. ☺☺☺

Lisa Stansfield – *Lisa Stansfield* (Arista) And anyway, if "Been Around The World" is what you want, there's still no place better to go for it than the original source. Stansfield's latest joint is a big commercial release, and, as such, it's mostly bland filler, but it's more than worth it for the incendiary vocals. Stansfield has never gotten the material she's deserved – she's probably the best pure soul singer of the past ten years – and I suppose she never will unless she cultivates a little daring. It's getting late in the game for her, but we can daydream, can't we? We can imagine Stansfield produced by Prince Be, or Brad Wood, or even (gasp!) Mitchell Froom, with Sean O'Hagan arranging synths and strings, Suzanne Vega playing acoustic guitar, Joan Armatrading on electric, and – hey! – is that Richard Thompson leaning in to take a solo? Let's get it together, guys. The best singers ought to be paired with the best producers and instrumentalists, and vice versa. That hasn't happened since the late seventies, and it damn well ought to happen again. ☺☺

Statik Sound System – *Tempesta II* (Ironamerica) Trip-hop, as a rule, is generally okay until they start to rap. At that point, it is, to quote Dres of the Black Sheep, "run for the hills, and hide your hos". The Statik Sound System has good beats, and a pretty well developed sense for samples. Helen White, who adds vocals to some of these tracks, is decent, and rarely gets in the way. But just when you've started to relax, and you've

settled into the groove, some British guy begins to emcee - and it's so puny and pathetic that you want to call LL on the phone and arrange a mercy beatdown. Rhetorical questions: why do all British emcees rap like Paula Cole? Why does anybody think they can emcee over those tinny, frantic techno beats, and make it sound convincing? Why does everybody think that hip-hop is a big supermarket, and they are at liberty to pick and choose elements as they please, and add them, decontextualized, to the goofy music they are making? Respect, please. JJ.

Moloko - Do You Like My Tight Sweater? (Warner Bros.) Now, here is an album I haven't said enough about. A hilarious disco record where the music is funnier than the words, it could be said that Moloko is to dance music as Lyle Lovett is to country, but that would disregard this duo's brilliant singularity. Because some of the drumbeats have that jungle poppity-pop-pop to them, Moloko gets filed in with the electronica. But that seems to be a complete misclassification - it would be more instructive to place "Tight Sweater" with hip-hop, because it's so monumentally wordy and fundamentally narrative. Another thing which differentiates the Moloko project from most of the new music is that singer Roisin Murphy emerges as a fully elaborated character with a winning sense of humor and a skewed worldview. And none of the ponderous seriousness or scone-dry textbook feel of techno is present here. It's a fifty minute innovative delight, and the year's most enjoyable album. ☺☺☺☺☺

Mogwai - Young Team (JetSet) Not everybody engaged in the new music is using synthesizers and samplers to do it. "Young

Team" is an album of loud, rock-guitar instrumentals, some of which stretch well past the eight minute mark. I've heard it compared several times to My Bloody Valentine. That's good as a direction, but really it doesn't explain much; because Mogwai is much more interested in dynamic variation and live energy than sound sculpture and phasing. Like Radiohead, another art-rock guitar band, Mogwai owes an unmistakable and unacknowledged debt to U2. ("With Or Without You" can be sung over several of these songs; but I wouldn't recommend it unless you want to ruin your experience of the album). That isn't to say that this is conventional music by any means - rather, it's a reminder of just how sonically characteristic, and brilliant, The Edge was at his best. It's hard to remember that now that U2 has become something of a cultural joke, but let's all give it another ten years. In the meantime, there is "Young Team", a more ambitious "Unforgettable Fire" without vocals. And depending on how you feel about Bono, that might sound to you like an unmitigated blessing. ☺☺☺☺☺

Belle & Sebastian - If You're Feeling Sinister (Jeepster) One last thing about this joint, I promise, and then I'll shut up long enough to let you actually listen to the record I've probably browbeaten you all into buying. Some of you have advanced the argument that "If You're Feeling Sinister" is a gay, or gay-positive album. The case for this interpretation hinges on a few veeery ambiguous lines in the song "Seeing Other People", and some clumsy attempts at sexual titillation on the recent EPs. Frankly, I don't see it at all. To me, Belle & Sebastian is about as gender-bendy as "The Cosby Show". Songwriter Stuart Murdoch, good though he is, articulates a set of stereotypically male attitudes; in places, his treatment of

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women on "If your Feeling Sinister" is shockingly prosaic and unimaginative. And if "Seeing Other People" really JisJ addressed to another man, Murdoch has done JeverthingJ he can to conceal that fact within a highly opaque lyric. Even if there JisJ encoding there, can't we expect something a little bolder before we lionize Belle & Sebastian's progressivity? We're not exactly living in a hostile climate for queer sentiment; hell, Janet Jackson has lesbian phone sex on her latest joint. There are plenty of good reasons to listen to "If Your Feeling Sinister", but Stuart Murdoch's set of gender politics is not one of them. They are conventional at best. ☺☺☺☺

Cornershop – *When I Was Born For The 7th Time* (Warner Bros.) It's hard not to pull for these guys – especially since Kula Shaker ripped off their concept, and far less worthy projects get away with much sloppier "multicultural" pastiches. But Tjinder Singh is the genuine article, and his Hindu-psychedelic jams have an earthy authenticity that Crispian Mills cannot begin to approximate. Unfortunately, however, this is where my appreciation for Cornershop ends. Too much of "When I Was Born For The 7th Time" relies on a laid-back, soporific grooviness that renders the record limp, forceless, and backgroundy. At times, Cornershop sounds like a British Sugar Ray – but Justin Warfield, who guests on "Candyman", is no Super Cat. If I had a greater level of tolerance for happy music, I'd probably be more forgiving of Cornershop's modest scope, but since I'm much more likely to respond to "Another Brick In The Wall" than to "Good Day Sunshine", I don't think I'll be spinning this one much. And do we really need more lines like "everybody needs a bosom for a pillow"? There should be benefits – real benefits – from escaping the cultural hegemony of the Red Hot Chili

Peppers. ☺☺

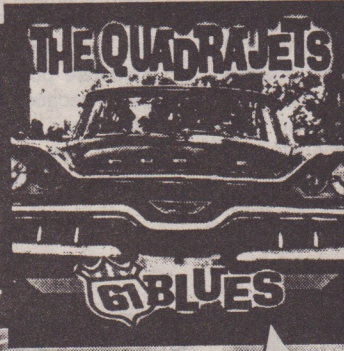
The Seahorses – *The Seahorses* (Geffen) This is John Squire's (guitar, The Stone Roses) new act. Squire has hooked up with a rhythm section who sound like veterans of a very competent boogie-bar circuit; and Squire himself adds to the feel by taking long, growly sub-Allman solos. When oblivious, pristine singer Chris Helme stops blaring away, you can close your eyes and convince yourself that you are listening to ZZ Top, circa 1983. That's a long way down from "Waterfall" or even "She Bangs The Drums", but in a sick sort of way, you have to admire that. ☺☺☺

Spiritualized – *Ladies And Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space* (Dedicated/Arista) It's hard for me to evaluate this album impartially, because I've come to admire it so much. I now tend to Monday-morning quarterback new releases with "Ladies And Gentlemen" as the current standard of excellence for modern rock music; as if all the missed chances, all the airtight production, all the flat sound, all the color-by-numbers arrangements, all the cynicism and sickening self-referentiality, and all the half-assed gestures which have come to epitomize '97 could be resolved in this one monstrous act of cohesion, conviction, and commitment. I could discourse at nauseating length on the qualities of Spiritualized, but I'll spare you, and give you the simple argument (and maybe even one that Jason Pierce could respect): there are many albums which are spooky on first hearing, but quickly become assimilated on repeated listens. Blur's new joint is a perfect example; the first time you hear it, the sonic ornamentation sounds very cool, but once you get to know it, you clear away the thickets and you find a real ordinariness at its heart. "Ladies And Gentlemen" is the rare album which becomes more frightening

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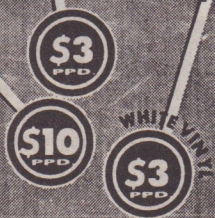
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and more intense the more you get to know it. The first time I heard "Cop Shoot Cop", the seventeen minute epic which closes the album, I got the chills, now, I swear I break out into a cold sweat. "Cool Waves" used to transfix me; now, it makes my knees buckle. Magnificent, courageous, a testament; I feel I cannot rave enough. ☺☺☺☺☺

The Verve – *Urban Hymns* (Virgin) At the other pole, there is The Verve, the phoniest act in Britain. Don't be duped into getting "Urban Hymns" just for the great single; really, go tape it off of a top-40 radio station or something. After "Bitter Sweet Symphony", the new Verve joint consists of fake sentiment, fake funk, fake half-assed Oasisisms, and maudlin crapola that would make Elton John blush; much of "Urban Hymns" suggests what "Streetlife Serenade" might sound like if Billy Joel didn't know how to write a melodic hook. Anyway, that isn't even what I wanted to complain about here -- what I wanted to complain about is the video for "Bitter Sweet Symphony" (which is, by any estimation, a great song) in which Richard Ashcroft walks down a crowded city street, intentionally bumping into women, and frequently knocking them over. If a rapper shot a video half this desultory, there would be a picket line around the record company offices the size of a medieval moat – and for good reason – but because Ashcroft is a brit-popper, he gets away with it. He's clearly trying to establish his grittiness as a pre-emptive strike, to compensate for the charges of wishy-washiness that "Urban Hymns" has deservedly gotten. Message to Ashcroft: stop hitting girls, and make some forceful music. Believe me, we'll think you're a hell of a lot tougher. ☺

Oasis – *Be Here Now* (Epic) I expected a backlash. What I did not expect was the backlash to be so pissy and inarticulate. But nobody's bothering to refute the silly charges that have so far stuck to "Be Here Now", so allow me to be the arch debunker: 1.) JGallagher has ripped off his new songs from contemporary acts, like Kula Shaker and PushermanJ. Well, he hasn't exactly, but even if he has, so what? Isn't it a little late to be criticizing Oasis for being derivative? There's nothing more intrinsically loathsome about borrowing from nineties groups than there is about borrowing from sixties acts. And Gallagher

has, at this point, developed a personal songwriting voice, grounded in rock formalism, but wholly and distinctively his own. 2.) JGallagher's lead playing is inept and redundantJ. Again, so what? That's what you're listening to Oasis for? Sure, it would be nice if Gallagher could play like Andy Bell, but he can't. He ornaments the songs as best as he can; generally, they don't need very much ornamentation. His playing was no better on "What's The Story (Morning Glory)", and nobody was complaining then. 3.) JThe new songs are simply rewrites of tracks from "Definitely Maybe"J. Which ones are? "Stand By Me" has a superficial resemblance to "Married With Children", but it's a far better song. "Don't Go Away" sounds a little like "Slide Away", but so do many of the songs on "What's The Story" – Oasis simply goes in for that kind of grandiosity. But the best songs on "Be Here Now" – "Magic Pie", "I Hope I Think, I Know", "The Girl In The Dirty Shirt", "Fade In/Out" – aren't rewrites of anything. They're new territory for Gallagher, and a natural progression of his terrific songwriting ideas. 4.) JGallagher's lyrics, always threadbare, have reached a new lowJ. This is the one that really burns me up. Because he is insecure about his lyrics, Gallagher doesn't prosthetize about them in interviews the way he does about his melodic mastery. Consequently, journalists looking to run Oasis down have seized upon this one moment of uncharacteristic modesty. But this is pure laziness – they're just repeating what they're fed by Gallagher himself. Gallagher isn't a good lyricist, he's a great one, and whether he knows it or not (I suspect he really doesn't), he proves it again and again with each release; and any reviewer who was really JlisteningJ couldn't help but notice that. "Don't go away/say what you'll say/but say that you'll stay"; that only seems simple until you start to think about it. "Live Forever", "Slide Away", "Wonderwall", "The Girl In The Dirty Shirt" – these are big, broad, generous statements that have achieved their immense popularity partly because of their lyrical clarity, and partly because Gallagher has the balls to put them in the mouth of a singer with the earnestness, energy, and attitude to deliver them. The result is pure oxygen, but it wouldn't be if Gallagher wasn't so lucid. ☺☺☺☺☺

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The title for this column is becoming more appropriate. Although the location of my new home in Nova Scotia is not quite as quiet as I had hoped it would be, it is on a corner lot, at the junction of two roads. And it is normally quiet. And surrounded by trees. I've been really busy working right now. For some reason, all this Quiet Corner stuff is starting to sound alike. I need a few killer releases to blow away the cobwebs. All self publishing projects have been cancelled but I do have a couple of columns in other zines. If anyone wishes to emulate David Heneniak and send their music directly to me, or if anyone feels like shipping me something for review, my new address is R.R.#3 Tatamagouche, N.S., Canada, BOK IV0. - Rodney Leighton

THOM MACFARLANE - Longtime (MacFarlane Music) A longish release ranging from ideal QUIET CORNER music to noise. Two bits from 60 years ago are aggravating; a couple of the songs are nothing to write home about, and the entire album is not exactly one to jump around about. However, there are some very good cuts. 'Jesus Was An American' is really good, as is 'Hey Casey'. On the other hand, the title track is annoying as hell. Makes me want to shut the thing off. Excuse me a sec. There, that's better. Well worth a listen overall but not a keeper for me.

EDITH O (self-titled) (113 Willow Ave, 1st floor, Hoboken NJ 07030; email: EdithSongs@aol.com) A pair of ladies who write good songs and mix a rock tendency with pop/folk leanings to produce a pleasing sound. Strangely, the folkie Erin Ash Sullivan, is a bit more harsh and grating than the rocker, Amy Speace. The guys with their bass and drums and guitars help out well. Quite enjoyable release.

NEILSON HUBBARD - The Slide Project (e pluribus unum, 8424A Santa Monica Blvd.#831, West Hollywood CA 90069) One of those guys who occasionally sounds like a gal, Hubbard is part of the Jackson MS. band THIS LIVING HAND, which is apparently a psychedelic group. The songs on this solo project are songs which didn't fit their groove, with more of a rock sound. No doubt of that: about a third of the tracks are pure rock & roll. Some are a bit strange; one or two come close to being noise. A good release.. but someone explain to me why I sometimes hear vocals which sound female and am surprised that the vocalist is male. By the way, guy, you sound better when you use your 'female' voice.

BIG HAPPY CROWD - Folk & Feedback (Zesty Records, POB 541061 Orlando FL 32854) The noisiest acoustic band ever, these 3 guys and a gal along with a multitude of guest singers and musicians produced a wide-ranging album which is great fun to listen to. Lead guy Rich Grula apparently uses this name for solo gigs as well as band gigs. If the album is any indication, the live band must be a real hoot. The songs are almost all about lost loves and social commentary mini-essays, but the group gives every appearance of having a ball despite the angst-filled lyrics. This all translates to a happy time. Rich used to be the bassist for...ah, who cares? This is a fun, good release. Get yourself a copy.

THE MARYS - back this way (Zesty Records) The Marys are from Weehawken, the hometown of Jersey Beat. A somewhat different version of Gene & Mimi. Frontman Don Brody is listed as being sole

or partial creator of all songs. I have heard a couple of them elsewhere, done better. Unfortunately, my memory is shot and my record system is non-existent and many of my CD's are still packed. I remember "The Day Roy Orbison Died" from somewhere, sounding better. Where? Damned if I know. [Editor's Note: It was previously released as a single.] Vocalist Connie Shartar doesn't quite have the range of Mimi; which is not to say she is bad. Not at all. Nor is the album. I wouldn't urge anyone to rush out and scour whatever city you are existing in for a copy; on the other hand, if you happen to see one and like fairly gentle folk-pop-whatever tunes, it would be worth your cash to grab a copy.

GREGG CAGNO - Tales From Sixth & Clinton (Zesty) . One of the folks from Camp Hoboken. Perfectly good folk/pop/whatever. It's just, for me, a little ...blah.



JABBER; self-titled (Feedbag Music) Nice picture on the liner. Five very nice ditties about life and love and such. Pure pop. The middle of "Stomp On Me" has a batch of spoken word amidst the singing. This often turns me off but this one works quite well. This may be due to the fact that we have here a sweet-voiced chick uttering lines like: "If someone asks if I am a virgin, I reply: Sometimes, and when the next boyfriend wonders how many guys I've been with, I'll reply: Somewhere between 20 and 40." And "If a guy asks me if I want to make love, I will reply: How long will it take?" A nice release.

BILLIE MYERS - Growing Pains (Universal) A super release from a sweet voiced songbird with a sultry delivery, writing and singing songs of love and lust and betrayal and, oh, you know, all those things pop singers write about. Produced by Desmond Child, there are a couple of weird

tracks on this album and one very amusing one; the remainder consists of very good pop. MTV quality stuff. Hey, I like it. Go to the store and buy a copy.

DAVID POE (Sony) A weird album, which has decent-to-good easy listening pop and suddenly, out of nowhere, for no discernible reason, they throw in some out-to-lunch this-side-of-Mars-someplace instrumental grooves. Different ...but not different enough.

ROD MacDONALD - And Then He Woke Up (Gadfly Records, P.O. Box 5231, Burlington VT 05402) The record company says to file this one under Folk but I dunno. Certainly some of the 14 songs on demo. Four powerful pop/rock songs, extremely well sung, well this release fall into that category. Personally, I would call most of them New Age Country, with a little Rock & Roll. 'The Death of Victor Jara' musically sounds almost exactly like Thomas Anderson's ode to Jerry Garcia entitled 'Jerry's Kids'. Although the lyrics are completely different. MacDonald has been around for awhile, founding the Greenwich Village Folk Festival in 1987. An enjoyable album.

CHIP TAYLOR - The Living Room Tapes (Gadfly) Another one labeled as Folk but not to my ears. Sounds like Country to me. Old

time Country, except for a couple of tunes. The exceedingly weird tribute to his mother entitled "Grandma's White LeBaron" defies classification. Taylor, the brother of actor Jon Voight, has been in the music business for ages. He wrote the lovely "Angel of The Morning" among tons of other stuff. For this release, he apparently went to the living rooms of David Mansfield and Jon Sholle and recorded these dozen songs. Not a bad album.

LUCE DRAYTON - Suicidal Angel (Edsel America Records, 729 7th Ave., NYC 10019) Well, she sings like an angel on many of the 13 cuts on this release. And Caroline Lavelle plays her cello like an angel as she guests on 'Holding On.' So the second half of the title is appropriate but I certainly hope the first half is metaphorical. Playing since age 14, Luce has toured the pubs, clubs and flubs of her native England and other portions of Europe. Putting together the album in the unlikely, albeit romantic, setting of a renovated sawmill in the middle of a creek, she accumulated some very good musicians including Swing Out Sister guitarist Tim Cansfield and bassist Julian Crampton. Good album; one which fits well the Quiet Corner concept but which rocks really well in places as well.

GREAT PLAINS GYPSIES - Meeting at the Building (Sunny Smedley Records, 1929 W. Superior, Chicago IL 60622) This release by singer-songwriter-guitarist Dan Whitaker and friends seems like old time Bluegrass/ Country, to me. While listening to it, I was reminded of Bill Monroe and at times of Flatt & Scruggs and, once, while washing dishes, I thought it seemed like those three had gotten together for a jam session. According to the publicist, Whitaker has spent years in a psychedelic pop rock band called June Bug Massacre. No sign of anything like that on here, though. Good album.

JIM LAMPOS - Innuendoes of Lafayette (P.O. Box 355 Cooper Station, NYC 10276) This guy did 180 gigs over the last two years and still found time to write all these songs sometime. Violinist

Chris Tedesco stands out in the musical department, although the instrumentation supplied by these two and 7 other guys is very good. The songs are mostly ballads: short stories set to music. I was recently reading some fantasy set in the days of a few hundred years ago and involving wandering minstrels who would tell tales, usually in song, for their keep. This album seems very appropriate for that. This chap would have fit in that life perfectly.

THE SHERYL SKYE BAND (Soma River Records, P.O. Box 40, Ringoes NJ 08551) This gal bears a striking resemblance to Ellen Degeneres. What is she doing with one of those voices which should emanate from large-chested dark-haired Italian-looking divas? Here's some ammo for the person who doesn't think we know what we are talking about: I would hate like Hell to have to try to categorize this album. It has pop or soft rock instrumentation, with some acoustic portions. I think the stand-out quality of this release is the unique voice of Sheryl. Beyond my limited powers of description, it is different than anything I have heard; I have no comparisons at all. I've been listening to it all afternoon and thoroughly enjoying doing so. If anyone heeds my recommendations, go find yourself a copy of this one.

COULD'VE CARRIED COPPER - Out In The Dark (Definition, POB 40112, Rochester NY 14604) A debut CD with tremendous promise. Singer/songwriter Petra Sedge has a rather unique voice which is intriguing and rather diverse. Sort of a little girl lost all grown up, the hard way voice. One of those delightful releases which encompass a variety of musical genres. Starts off like a C&W album, goes to many different styles, meanwhile maintaining its uniqueness. Good songs, good arrangements, good instrumentation, good release.

KATE SCHROCK - Shunyata (Kakelane Music, 1559 N. Lasalle, P.O. Box 142 Chicago IL 60610) Seeing the cover, I thought that my editor had remembered I like some raucous stuff occasionally.

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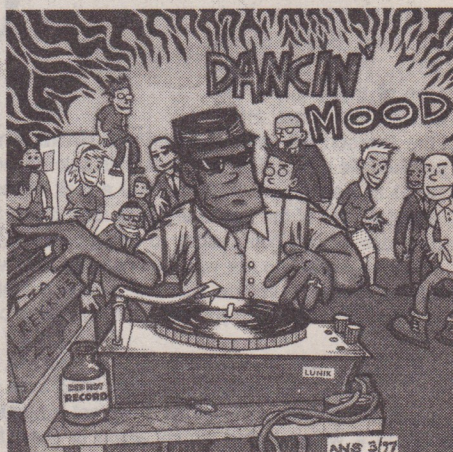
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Crank it up and get surprised. Very definite QC material, with nicely sung ballads and stories and a couple of almost hymns. Way cool guitar work is nicely surrounded by piano, organ and horns. Kate wrote the songs; sings them well and did the artwork which may fit the songs but not the style, if you know what I mean. Good one, check it out.

NJ BANDS: A Benefit for Children's Specialized Hospital. Stoneback & Woodford apparently produced this 17 track disc, as well as contributing 4 songs. All profits will be donated to the Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside, NJ. There are also 12 other performers, mostly not bad to very good. Dan McBride & 13 Hands provide an hilarious ode to old cars. Alaskan contribute a number about travelling on, which was quite appropriate since I was in the process of house hunting while listening to this one. Velour 44, with their two gal singers, reminds me of L7, and contribute a fine number entitled "Fine." Mostly Quiet Corner-type music; a good release which I shall keep for another day. Go buy a copy.

DAVID HELENIAC (445 North Ave, Dunellen NJ 08812) David is a law student who writes pop songs, plays guitar, reads Jersey Beat, and dreams of releasing an album. He somehow conceived the fantasy that a positive review by me would prompt any number of producers to contact him with offers of producing a CD with him. Well, his music would fit very well on Cleveland's fine Sound O' The Sea; his music fits The Quiet Corner to a tee; and if he finds the right label, I hope he sends me a copy of his CD directly. I would be delighted to slip it in the player and let it run for 8 or 10 plays and then attempt to write something about it. Record labels: If my opinion means anything to you, contact this guy. I want him to succeed because I want the CD.

J.M. REIMER - "Vintage Burlap" cassette (Pollen Hat Productions, P.O. Box 720801, Belmont Station, Dallas TX 75372) Full length tape release recorded in his own and his parents' house. I have no idea where to place this. Very early in the first listen, I found myself screaming: "Jim, why the FUCK did you send me this???" Then, suddenly, there is some almost QuietCorner-like material. And then a lot of noise and wailing and teeth gnashing and some guy beating the living hell out of a drumset. And then something which seems like a Country ballad backed by Jimi Hendrix. And some of the strangest stuff. Then I remembered that I told the boss I needed something to blow away the cobwebs in my head and some of this release tries hard. And, well, I have been bitching about all the Quiet Corner releases sounding exactly alike. No fear of that here. Not only does this release sound different from the usual stuff, every cut sounds different than the previous one. After four plays, it's time to toss it. Didn't really ecite me. Then again, this is the longest music review I've written in ages. HmMMM.

DUF DAVIS & THE BOOK CLUB - Demo (51 Grover Ave., Princeton NJ 08540) A fairly good, poppy song entitled "Mama's Boy;" a not-bad instrumental, if you like instrumentals; and something entitled "My Last Sexual Experience." which is primarily noise and screeching. God knows if the experience was good or terrifying.

THE ROSEMARY PURE - "Some Days" Demo (Chip Morrow, 53 Baldwin St., New Brunswick NJ 08901) A top-notch performed by the band behind the unnamed and unknown female vocalist. If I were in the business of creating music releases, I would contact these folks about making a full length album. If I ran a club which booked music, I would contact them about doing some

shows. If I were a real music reviewer, I would hope that when they release longer works of fine music, I would receive copies in the mail. What can I say? A very promising group which I hope goes far.

HOLLY McNARLAND - *Stuff* (Universal) Ah, a punk rocker who belts out tunes with an intensity you can feel; who slows down a bit now and then but who normally rocks the house. And she's Canadian! Yeah! The presskit says she gets naked on stage. Enough trivia, this is a good album; grab yourselves a copy and cleanse your souls.

DANIELLE HOWLE and the **TANTRUMS** - *Do A Two Sable* (Daemon) After opening for the Indigo Girls, this young lady (who sounds like no one except herself, albeit with nods to Melissa Etheridge and a laidback Joni Mitchell) is now headed towards stardom. Perhaps. Fronting this rock band while performing solo acoustic gigs concurrently, she writes good songs and performs them a tad better than adequately. Unfortunately, she also sounds considerably like Canada's worst ever offspring, the Canadian Scarecrow k.d.lang.

AMAZING GRACE (Island) The profits from this compilation CD go to a hospital in NY which is doing cancer research. The artists range from total unknowns (to me, anyway) to well-known mainstream pop stars. The title song is performed on track one by Ani DiFranco. Not very good. Track 12 is also a version of "Amazing Grace" by Daniel Lanois - a God in Quebec! - with help from Aaron Neville. It's okay. Melissa Etheridge contributes a good number entitled "I Will Never Be The Same." Jane Siberry does her thing. (Amazing how many female Canadian singers I dislike, huh?). And perhaps the best cut is "Summertime" by Angelique Kidjo, written by George and Ira Gershwin. Go buy a copy and help out the cancer research. Enjoy Melissa and Angie.

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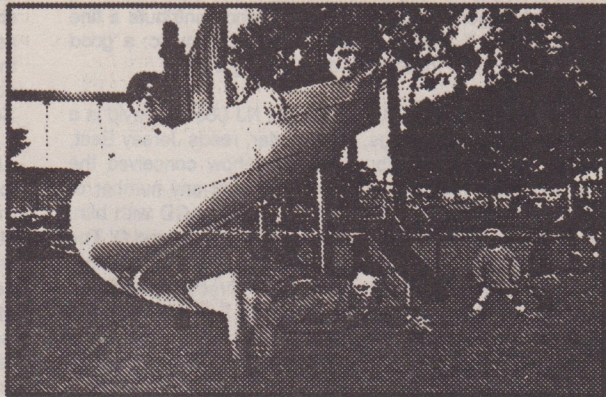
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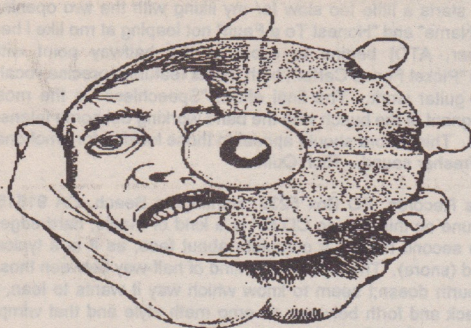
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Record Reviews

25 TA LIFE - *Strength Through Unity* (Triple Crown Records, 331 W. 57th St. #472, New York NY 10019) Yo, yo, yo, word up. Some more NYC hardcore, which is normally good, but this sucks. Everything is ok and then the lyrics come in and your just like, what the fuck? I just got a damn heavy metal CD. Very slow and very unoriginal lyrics (just look at the title of the CD!). After ya hear this one, you'll be asking for a new pair of Filas from Santa, not that anti-flag tattoo. - Conor Moore

454 BIG BLOCK - *Save Me From Myself* (Big Wheel Recreation, 325 Huntington Ave # 324, Boston, MA 02115) While this sounds like pure metal from the first note of the album, 454 Big Block dumps all the things that you hate about metal. There is no big hair, make up or unneeded, never-ending guitar solos here. Instead, each track beats you over the head and then gets out of the way for the next song. Elgin Nathaniel James is the focal point here, as he is both vocalist and lyricist for the band. His vocal style is similar to an animal attacking its prey-vicious and relentless, never pausing until it knows it has killed its target. Songs like "Lamb", "Born Human", "Brother Man" and "Down" are as easy to handle as swallowing broken glass. The dual guitar playing of Dean Baltulanis and Ralph Dinunzio are fierce without ever being overdone. The repetition of the phrase "You can't break me" from "Department of Youth Services" sums up the sentiments of this release. This is worth hearing. - Rich Quinlan

A DON PIPER SITUATION (Scrimshaw Records, PO Box 17022 Chapel Hill NC 27516) As the story goes, this Austin-based singer/songwriter/popster generated a great deal of major label interest after a falling out between himself and the Gallagher boys in Oasis. Don had written some songs for the self-indulgent kings of whine, but they were never used. So, Capitol Records signed him, but so did Scrimshaw. This five song EP will tide you over until the major release in 1998. The disc is a collection of very pretty, sometimes Barlow-like, other times Beatlesque pop. "Turn It On" has a rough around the edges feel as it plods along, while "The Finger" has a quasi-psychedelic touch. Neither of these songs really excited me. The more stripped down "Start Again" and "Song For Joy" stood out as the stronger tracks here for they allowed Don to display a wonderfully sensitive voice with minimal instrumentation behind it. Ear candy pop comes and goes, and this will not stay with me for very long. However, fans of pristine pop will love this, and besides, it is way better than anything Oasis could do. - Rich Quinlan

THE ABDUCTED (V.M.L., Box 183, Franklin Park, IL 60131) Nineteen excellent power punk songs. I hear a lot of Screeching Weasel influence here. "Whatever It Is I Don't Care" is a great snotty, bratty punk tune. I liked every song on the disc. - Denis Sheehan

ACTION PATROL (Whirled Records, PO Box 5431, Richmond, VA 23220) Three previous releases can be found here. The "Up And Running" 7 inch, "B Is For Bombed" 7 inch, and the "Weak Force" 12 inch LP are all included - 22 great sounding punk tunes. The lead singer's voice is a bit odd sounding (Neil Young odd) and a little weak, but great to listen to. The first song "Tube" is excellent and the cover of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" is one of the best covers I've ever heard. - Denis Sheehan

AIN'T - *If It's Illegal To Rock N' Roll, Then Throw My Ass In Jail* (Gluttony Productions, 584 Castro, Suite 622, San Francisco CA 94114) The title of this disc really should tell you all you need to know about this old fashioned gritty rock band. Ain't plays rock n'roll with both boozy swagger and punk aggression. Lead vocalist Lauren snarls her way through fourteen tracks including a Motorhead cover ("Rock N' Roll"... what else?) While songs like "Cheats to Get Ahead", and "Rum Old Joker" are certainly solid songs, it's the fast-paced punk rave ups like "Folk Devils and Moral Panic", "Rocky's Last Kiss" and "Whistle and Punk" that truly displays the raw power of this band. The production here was handled by Jack Endino who is a master when it comes to getting the most out of what he works with. A selection of

tracks feature clips from live shows that treats you to Lauren's brazen stage presence. This is not flashy or spectacular, but Ain't delivers classic, unpretentious, angry guitar rock, and that ain't bad. - Rich Quinlan

ALL-SCARS (Slowtime Records, P) Box 414, Arlington VA 22210) This 16 song debut is divided into two sections, "Early" and "Ambient". There is a slight difference between the two, but both are equally interesting. The All-Scars create haunting, twisted soundscapes that convey moods and attitude. This is a disc that will appeal a select group of people who are ready to expand their musical horizons by abandoning their conventional ideas of song structure. The strength lies in the willingness of the members to improvise and play off each other, particularly with the nicely placed trumpet of Jerry Busher and Chuck Bettis. Somewhat eerie and ethereal keyboards also contribute to this wildly interesting release. This is far from the ordinary, and is purely for those with the courage to check this out. - Rich Quinlan

The tracks have no names, other than being identified as part of the "early set" (AKA Set B) or the "ambient set." Many of the songs in the early set (tracks 1-9) sound very much like old-school post-punk and DC-style Revolution Summer emo (like from the mid-80s.) One song is kind of funky, and another is very minimalist, using 60 cycle hum as part of the music. The ambient set is not very ambient, in the traditional sense of the term. It's more doodling around than anything, and isn't particularly interesting doodling, either. The stuff in the early set make this a worth-while disc, nonetheless. - Paul Silver

ALLOY JACKS - *Ancient Chinese Secret* (We Eat Garlic Music, 636 Glacier Trail, Roselle IL 60172) If you're looking for a very musically diverse band, then Alloy Jacks is for you. You will find twenty songs that range from punk, jazz, surf style rock, hard rock, slow love songs and even a few instrumentals on this disc. One of the instrumentals is Elvis' "Can't Help Falling In Love." The bass, drums, and guitars are all very well done. The vocals, on the other hand, aren't. The singer sounds weak, out of key, and often cracks while reaching for higher notes. - Denis Sheehan

ALLSTONIANS - *Allston Beat* (Moon) One of the many fine ska bands from Boston, The Allstonians follow the formula for the more traditionally mellow 2-tone style. "It's got a good beat and you can skank to it". - Gary McGarvey Jr.

AMAZING ROYAL CROWNS (Kingdom Records, PO Box 40789, Providence RI 02940-0789) What we got here is some rockabilly (Stray Cats, Cramps) and that that is good stuff. I hear they're trying to find Elvis to be the opening act for these guys. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

AMERICAN LESION (Atlantic) Bad Religion unplugged? Well, not really, but very close. This surprising release comes from BR lead singer and songwriter Greg Graffin. Listeners may be taken off guard by this effort. The lyrics here are Graffin's standard intelligent, introspective lyrics that tackle emotional and world issues with a sly sense of humor and an honest intensity. However, musically, Graffin has stepped away from speedy guitar, feedback and furious drumming. Graffin instead creates soulful, emotional music that reveals a more personal side of the singer. Select tracks here have a Joe Jackson feel to them, particularly "Fate's Cruel Hand" and "Back to Earth". Graffin's husky voice, while not dynamic, is allowed center stage, with only sparse acoustic guitar and haunting piano behind it. The majority of the album's lyrical content deals with today's culture, which in Graffin's eyes is far too driven by money and corporations, void of any emotional well-being. Emotion is what carries this album, and makes it a very pleasant surprise and a sign of growth and maturity for Graffin. The man deserves high praise for this effort. - Rich Quinlan

AMORPHIS - *My Kantele* (Relapse Records) 5-song E.P. by Finland's (I guess) Progressive rock band. The weird thing is that I could've sworn that

in the 80's, Amorphis were death metal. Now they're half acoustic, half electric. It's good actually, lots of tripped out sound effects, keyboards, good guitar riffs. At times, the songs tend to wander off into open jams kinda like Deep Purple used to do. But I guess if that's what they were striving for, they accomplished it well -Phil Pinto

PETE ANDERSON - *Dogs in Heaven* (Little Dog Records, 825 Eighth Avenue New York, NY 10019) The current country-rock music revival stands as one of the few genuinely good off-shoots from America's otherwise pretty pathetic obsession with phony baloney 70's nostalgia, as this intensely bluesy, cookin'-with-high-octane-gas CD gloriously affirms. Anderson's thick, nasal, twangy mumble (think Bob Dylan with a heavy good ol' boy drawl) takes a little getting used to, but overall this honey kicks out the bompin', rompin', stompin' redneck rock jams with infectious shit-kickin' elan: Whether he's being backed up by a soulful chorus on such fabulously funky-ass tracks as "Better Way" and "Ain't That Peculiar," or cutting loose with a deliciously down'n'dirty blues groove on the blistering "110 in the Shade," Anderson proves that there's more than enough juice within the country-rock genre to keep it alive and blazin' well into the 21st century and beyond. And the titular instrumental smokes more than a volcano shortly after eruption. - Joe Wawryzniak

ANGIE APARO - *Out of the Everywhere* (Wee R Pee Records, 545 North Hayworth Avenue 3 203 Los Angeles, CA 90048) Sporting a rather peculiar name, a lovely knack for winningly bittersweet lyrics, a commendably reflective spirit, and a slight, quavering tenor, this Atlanta, Georgia native offers 10 uniformly sound examples of country music at its most beautifully mournful and melodic. Supported by suitably spare, tuneful, and understated arrangements, Angie's delicately pitched vocals relate lots of choice downhome introspection that manages to be quite moving without ever getting too mushy about it. A very pretty, tender, warmly affecting album which deftly tugs at the heartstrings and gives the listener a pleasing earful of gorgeously harmonic sonic musings. - Joe Wawryzniak

THE APPLES IN STEREO - *Tone Soul Evolution* (SpinArt) More loose jangly fun pop from the Apples. Sixties-influenced pop ala' the Beach Boys, Beatles and VU, with great melodies and harmonies & a nice lo-fi quality to make any indie-nerd drool all over themselves. A great record all the way through, and a nice one to throw on after a long grueling day at work - Rick K.

AQUABATS - *The Fury Of...* (Goldenvoice/Timebomb, 6 West 57th St., NY, NY 10019) I know I can be quoted as saying that other ska bands were the most fun things I've heard, but that was before I heard the Aquabats. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

ARM - self-titled 12" LP (Po Box 27293, Minneapolis MN 55427-0293) This noisy trio bashes through a collection of songs that lack originality on the first side of the album and then suddenly emerge with new life on the flipside. The first batch of tunes here struck me as a more angry Silverchair. The vocals are mumbled screams and the guitar work thin and angry, but nothing refreshing or truly exciting. However, once the second side kicks in, you are shown a different band. "Red Crown" and "Mr. Superhuman" are captivating pieces of raw musicianship with life and some catchy riffs. The stuff here still will remind people of an early 90's Seattle sound, and hopefully it's too soon for a grunge revival. This was a little disappointing from a band that has released some excellent singles in the past. The difference here is that the songs were a little too thin, lacking the beefy guitar punch of their earlier work. Sadly, Arm has since disbanded. Otherwise, surely this feisty young unit would have been sure to bounce back with a much stronger work. -Rich Quinlan

ARMY OF JUAN (Ska Satellite/Moon) I've really noticed that ska from the Mid-West has a very distinct sound, kinda hyper, but not full blown. Army of Juan are kinda good but not full blown... too funky. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

ARNOLD - *The Barn Tapes* (Creation) Very slow, sedate rock. Sounds like soft, hippy love tunes from the 1960's. Most of the vocals are of the electric muffled sound. - Denis Sheehan

ARTICLES - *Flip F' real* (Moon) The word Ska connotes Jamaica, but in fact the roots of ska are American (am I too controversial). Original ska is based upon Soul, R&B, and Jazz (all were American creations) with the island flair stirred in. The Articles from Michigan know this and that is the angle for *Flip F' real*. Not only do the original tunes feel like they're from another time, the covers (T.Monk, Charlie Parker, Laurel Ailkin, Skatalites) are reminders of exemplary Jazz and Ska done right. Overly enjoyable! - Gary McGarvey Jr.

AT THE DRIVE IN - *El Gran Orgo* (Offtime, PO Box 220763, El Paso TX 79913) This is an unique little EP from a band that has some clearly

defined emo characteristics, but should not be tagged as solely an emo band. The disc starts a little too slow for my liking with the two opening tracks "Give It a Name" and "Honest To a Fault" not leaping at me like I had hoped. However, ATDI begins to excel at the halfway point with "Fahrenheit" and "Picket Fence Cartel", both tracks featuring precise vocals and imaginative guitar work. The final effort, "Speechless" is the most powerful and poignant of the bunch with the band working out some intense emotional issues. This record should appeal to those looking for emotional hardcore with a fresher sound. - Rich Quinlan

AUTUMN (Crisis Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 91615-5232) The first tune on this 4-song CD EP is a kind of manic, hard-edged emo song. The second tune is a complete about face, as it is a typical metal-style ballad (snore). The third tune is kind of half-way between those two, while the fourth doesn't seem to know which way it wants to lean, it kind of jumps back and forth between an emo math style and that wimpy rock shit. Mixed bag. - Paul Silver

BABY ALIVE - *What Is It?* (XEMU Records, 34 W 17th St., 5th Fl, NY, NY 10011) Danger: this is being marketed as filling the gap in the market for an all female commercial band. They were also winners of MTV's best female band award. Even with all that negative baggage, they're still enjoyable. Lots of Beatie riffs and beefy choruses mingle amongst well-crafted songs and psychedelic swirl. Very radio friendly, but I'll stick to the Avengers. - Tom Brebrie



Arm

BARBECUE BOB AND THE SPARERIBS - *After School Special* (DaDa Records, PO Box 112 New Brunswick, NJ 08903-0112) Here's some incredibly happening noise, a tasty, mouth-watering, wonderfully raggedy-ass eruption of down'n'dirty, pourin'-my-heart-out, tearin'-down-the-walls blues tunes! Man, oh man, does this honey cut loose with some seriously smokin' red-hot shit: severely keening vocals, sharp, staccato machine-gun guitar, madly poundin' drums, intensely wailin' harmonica, beautifully simmering Hammond organ, nicely scintillating piano, straightforward lyrics, right'n'tight arrangements, terrific tell-all song titles (choicest cut: "Drinkin' & Gamblin'"), enough dense, dripping melancholy vibes to make even the most hard-hearted person misty-eyed, even a suitably rough-assed mangling of the ol' Bo Diddley shuffle beat (the aptly titled "Drivin' Me Crazy") -- y'know, all the essential kick-ass ingredients for one divinely dead-on album. Spirited and sloppy, with a fine, fat sprinkling of homey, howlin'-at-the-moon soul, this album sure is finger lickin' good! - Joe Wawryzniak

BARON AUTOMATIC - *Wayrunner* (Dummyup, PO Box 642634, San Francisco, CA 94164) Powerful, uppity-sounding pop punk. The song "Beautiful" is a pretty good ska song. For the last song, "Olim," the uppitness is tossed aside for pure hardcore punk. The disc is capped off with two unlisted tracks. One is some dude reciting poetry (I think), and the second is a hillbilly punk song probably called "That Punk Rock Guy Just

record reviews

Gave Me The Finger." Although the entire disc is good, "Million People" and "Bambi," are the two best bets. - Denis Sheehan

BEAT ANGELS - *Red Badge Of Discourage* (Epiphany!, 1303 W 31st Street, Tempe AZ 85282) Quick, call Jenny Jones, have I got a theme show for her: "HELP! My band looks like glam rockers!" One of Jenny's makeovers and those Nikki Sixx haircuts and the heroin chic wardrobe will be gone and maybe these guys can get treated with a little respect. Because, sure, they look like some cheesy L.A. glam band, but this CD is just way-cool power-pop from start to finish. Catchy, fizzy, neat backup harmonies out the wazoo, and choruses you'll be humming in the shower for weeks. Fans of D Generation (or, heck, the Bay City Rollers) who can get past the image thing will eat this up like the sugar-coated treat it is. - Jim T.

BETTER THAN A THOUSAND - *Just One* (Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach CA 92615-5232) If there is such a thing as a hardcore supergroup, than this may well be it. Led by the instantly recognizable vocals of Ray Cappo, BTAT rips through eleven stunning tracks of intelligent, pounding hardcore with enough thrash and melody to make even the most jaded listener excited. The songs here are all well constructed, and allow each of the members (who happen to be Graham Land, Jeff Neuman and Kenneth Olden) to display their talents. Land scorches this record while Olden and Neuman lock into malicious grooves on tracks like "It Never Rains" and "We Spoke Our Minds". Lyrically, the band expounds upon the ideas of optimism and spirituality. (Their name comes from a book of Eastern philosophy). The real standout for me was the all too honest lyrics of "Alternative Nation", featuring the lines "Costume changes will never get you the answer you're looking for/Personality can't be purchased in a skateboard store". What else needs to be said? Get this. - Rich Quinlan

Are you as disappointed in the new Shelter album as I am? Well, dig this. Ray Cappo (Shelter) has gone back to his pre-Krishna days. 80's style hardcore with a 90's twist, which means it sounds a lot more like Youth of Today. Music to listen to without fear of reprisal from Kali. Good stuff. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

BIOHAZARD - *No Holds Barred* (Roadrunner) Finally, Biohazard woke up and went back to RoadRunner and released a good album (unlike *Mata Leao*). This is a live album that captures "Bio" in Europe at their best. They do 2 medleys of songs from just about all the albums. They say in the CD that it was recorded 100% live, uncut, and raw and they stick to that. Excellent recording! - Phil Pinto

BITCH 'N' MOAN - *Silicone Messiah* (Malibu Records) I keep listening to this and I'm not sure what to make of it. The liner notes read "Written, produced, arranged, and composed by Tim St. John," and I'm pretty sure he sings and plays everything too. The drums alternately sound real or like a drum machine. The music is, well, weird... Hollywood glam passed through a Trent Reznorish electronic filter, with a lot of obvious synth effects and heavy distortion on the guitar and vocals. The title track is nearly-five-minutes long with endless (and to me, pointless) riffing in between faux-Axl screaming-meemie verses. Guns N Roses, meet Marilyn Manson. Marilyn, go take your medication. - Jim T.

BLACK FORK - *Rock for Loot* (Lookout) Great! Great! Great! This disc has everything that I love about punk rock-speed, energy, screeching vocals, tight playing and no pretentious egos. This is easily the best thing I have heard from the Lookout camp in months. The overall vibe of *Rock for Loot* is fabulous, but it is vocalist Robin Tussin who rules this release. Her high pitched, angered squeals capture the finest aspects of Kat from Babes in Toyland, with the occasional little girl charm of Kim from the Muffs, making for a combination that is lethal and addictive. She is surrounded by furious players, most noticeably drummer Jim Nastic (nice touch), who leads the band through thirteen rapid fire tracks that you wish would last longer. You must check out "Total Eclipse of the Brain", "Scambulance", "Listen to Win" and their fabulous version of the Plugz' "A Gain to Lose". I think I'm in love. - Rich Quinlan

BLANKS 77 - *Tanked And Pogoed* (Radical) This is a definite improvement over their debut from last year. They still play that late '70's punk sound with a snotty attitude, but now the tunes are far more memorable and easy to sing along to. Stand out tracks include "Void", "Burn It Down" and "Gimme Speed". This one's a keeper. - Rick Spithoff

BLIND PIGS - *Sao Paulo Chaos* (Grita, PO Box 1216 New York, New York, 10156) This Brazilian based outfit, led by a 23 year old vocalist who also happens to be an English teacher, plays speedy, political punk with a honest throw-back feel. The Pigs play with reckless abandon, but their desire for speed never overshadows their skill. Lyricist and singer Henricke lashes out against the government, ignorance, and even the Sex Pistols. The Blind Pigs roast the Pistols on a track called "No Pistols Reunion", labeling them "establishment". Even when the band performs in Portuguese the stuff smokes, most noticeably on "Verao de 68", a song in which the lyrics are still wildly catchy and you find yourself singing along even if you cannot speak the language. There is simple yet effective guitar work throughout the record provided by 19-year old Mauro and the bulky Gordo. As you listen to *Sao Paulo Chaos*, you cannot help but notice that the members certainly wear their influences on their sleeves; however, they maintain a brashness that transcends the "old school" label and keeps this stuff sounding refreshingly honest. Fourteen songs of fast, singalong punk in 21 glorious minutes in which "Sweet Fury", "In Love With a Junkie" and the brutal "Urban Paranoia" stick out as the gems of the collection. This will be in your CD player for a while. - Rich Quinlan

BLUEBIRD (Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232) Wow. An exciting cross between old-style progressive rock of the early 70s and modern day emo of the 90s. "Hereditary Transmissions," the disc opener, starts out with very quiet, calm guitar and vibraphone, repeating a quiet riff, over and over. Then the energy busts loose, with progressive rock guitar and bass and Fugazi-esque vocals. Other songs on this 6 song EP are in a similar vein -- energetic, psychedelic sounds of progressive rock with emotional vocals. "Spark and Smolder," the last cut on the disc, is a departure from the rest of the songs, sounding more like a laid-back Soulside. A time-warped and mind-warped of a disc. - Paul Silver

BLUE MOUNTAIN - *Home Grown* (Roadrunner) Starting with the irresistible spitfire vibrance of "Bloody 98" and wrapping things up nicely with the deeply moving heartbreak number "Rain," this bang-up country-rock trio really delivers the lively, potentially visceral, ass-kickin' goods with ripsnorting proficiency. The lead singer's foggy drawl, the urgently propulsive and uncomplicated "pretense, we don't need no stinkin' pretense!" arrangements, the sumptuously regretful feelin' really down and depressed tone of the slower cuts, the band's refreshingly unpretentious attitude, the astutely reflective songwriting (the wistful melancholy expressed in "Myrna Lee" proves to be particularly haunting), and the album's crisp, atmospheric production all add up to one swell, sweet bitch of a record. - Joe Wawryzniak

BLUE PINE LODGE - *Under A Canopy of Stars* (Good Guppy, PO Box 2342, Huntington NY 11743) While much of the MTV generation seems content with albums that contain only one or two strong singles with very little listening continuity, *Under A Canopy of Stars* is a return to the idea of the album as a whole in and of itself. Former Bello Lamb rocker Mike Segretto has put together a collection of 15 quality rock songs ranging from the poppy to the guttural to the delicate with influences including The Pixies and The Beach Boys, all in a nineties package. The lyrics are often very cynical and tongue-and-cheek and the arrangements vary from your standard rock trio to cello, piano and saxophone. *Under A Canopy of Stars* is very much a rock and roll album in the traditional sense of the word, and there is little to do with trends here. Just well-written songs and an enjoyable listen. - Dan Skinner

BLUE STINGRAYS - *Surf-N-Burn* (Epitome/Epitaph) If you're into instrumental surf music then get this. This may not have the speedy eloquence of Dick Dale's double picking, but it's got total soul surfing reverb. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

BORIS THE SPRINKLER - *Mega Anal* (Bulge) This is the third and best major release by Rev. Norb and the boys. As you would expect the lyrics are all irreverent humour, and of course they continue to be musically inspired by The Ramones and other early pop punk bands, but this time the songs are faster and catchier than ever. It also helps that they've reduced the amount of filler. - Rick Spithoff

BORKNAGER - *Olden Domain* (Century Media) Full blown Norwegian black metal. Technically complex, dark, symphonic and downright evil. I've been known to play this a lot. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

BOTSWANAS - *Mockers and Rods* (Feralette Records, P.O. Box 20189 NY, NY 10014-0129) Fun rawking punk rock on the border of indie (hey, it's a thin line). Female vocals that power the music. - Eva Silverman

THE BOUNCING SOULS (Epitaph) This band just keeps on getting better and better with every passing minute. This one is just as good as the last two (if not better) and will have you jumping around all over your room. Very energetic and very fast from these 4 punks from NJ. There is just something about this band that really gets me all hyped up; if you have not heard these guys before, definitely check them out. This one won't be leaving my CD player for a while! - Conor Moore

BOY SETS FIRE - *The Day the Sun Went Out* (Initial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville KY 40217) This dazzling Newark, Delaware band plays progressive hardcore blending ferocious energy on tracks like "Toy Gun Anthem" with more emotional efforts like "In Hope" and "Cadence". This is clearly a band willing to experiment with their sound and the mood of this disc changes from song to song, creating a fantastic experimental collection of well written hardcore. The disc gets off to a flying start with "Pure" and "Cringe", both of which grab the listener instantly and challenges your preconceived notions of what defines hardcore. My personal highlight was the poignant "Another Badge of Courage", whose all too honest lyrics are equally matched musically. There are traces of Margin Walker-era Fugazi, particularly on "65 Factory Outlets", blending noise, energy and amazingly awkward tempo changes. This is very impressive. - Rich Quinlan

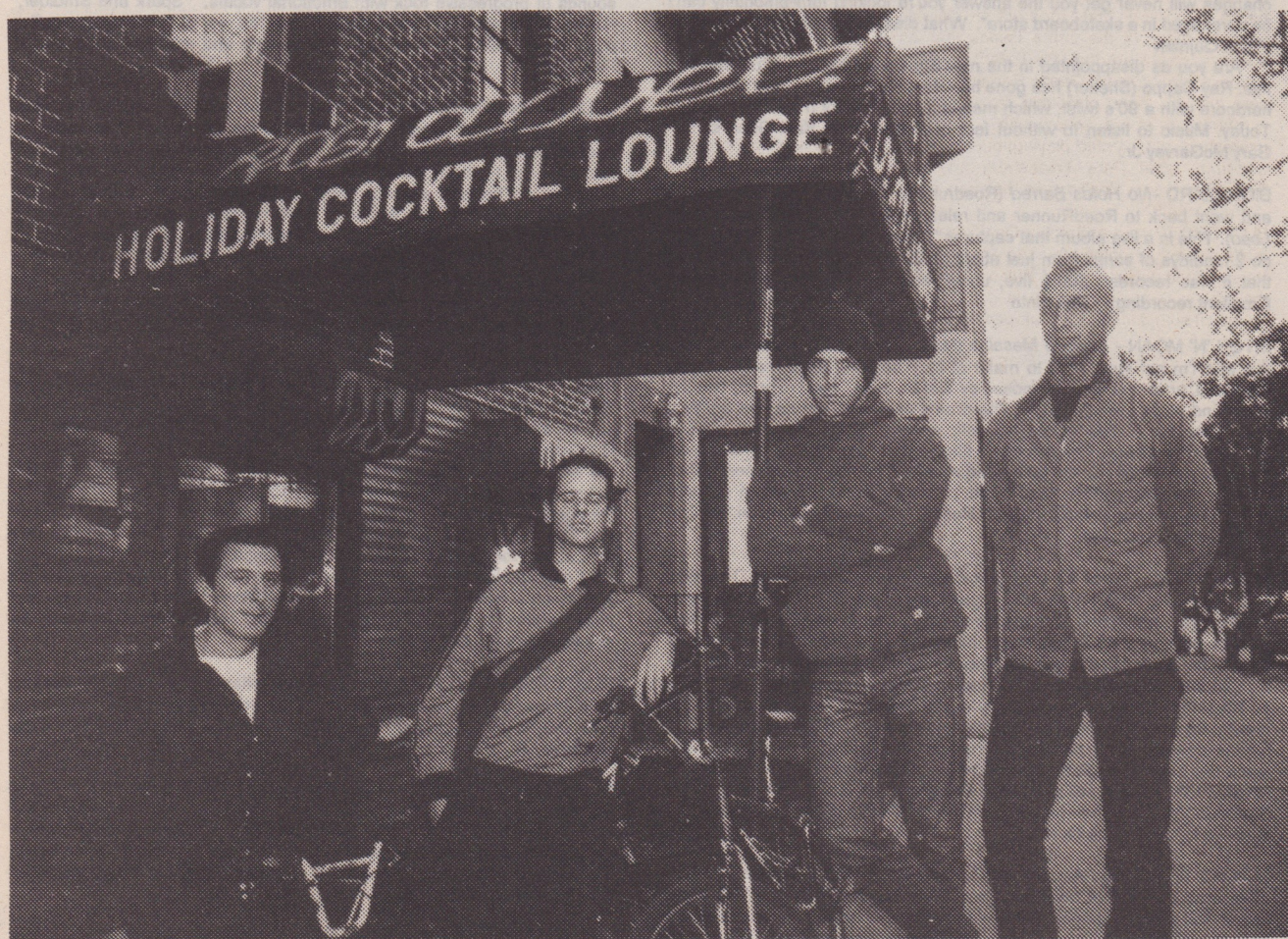
BRACKET - *Novelty Forever* (Fat Wreck Chords) I've liked Bracket's music in the past but this one does nothing for me. It seems like Bracket have lost their true sound and have fallen into the more trendy pop punk that's more pop than punk. This band could be on MTV anyday now - yes, it's that slow and unpunk (well, maybe not unpunk... but it is so unoriginal that it's just boring). - Conor Moore

BRAND NEW UNIT - *diddley squat* (Creative Man, 1875 Century Park East #1165, Los Angeles CA 90067) Amazing artwork. Fast fast fast punk rock with vocals almost bordering on hardcore (minus extreme screaming). Strong important lyrics about life, cops and experience. Good band. - Eva Silverman

THE BREETLES - *Spoof* (Shuss Systems/No Fault Recordings, 6 Elm St. Oakland NJ 07436) Sounds like Chris Breetveld (song writer, singer, and most instruments) is influenced by The Beatles and the Monkeys. Take that influence, add a pop punk sound with hilarious, witty lyrics, and you've got The Breetles. Very catchy disc. - Denis Sheehan

BROTHER'S KEEPER - *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy* (Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724) A quick warning -- hang on tightly when listening to this blistering release from Erie, Pennsylvania's Brother's Keeper. This six song EP of relentless hardcore left me speechless; BK leaves contemporary acts in the dust, as it churns out metal-tinged hardcore in the vein of Earth Crisis and Snapcase. Musically, the band is remarkably tight, constructing an impressive wall of sound from which singer Michael Lastowski delivers his flesh-ripping vocals. Pay careful attention to the guitar work provided by Chris Bazan and Scott emhoff, both of whom are inventive and unique, especially on the disc's title track and "Paint Me Red". Other notable efforts include the pounding "Coughdrop," in which the rhythm section of drummer Robert Williams and bassist Eric Schauffle step to the forefront, and the closer, "Dogs Will Bark". Get this, memorize the lyrics and then scream along at their next show. - Rich Quinlan

BRUTAL TRUTH - *Sounds Of The Animal Kingdom* (Relapse) 74 minutes of grindcore brutality except that the last 21 minutes of the album is a waste.



Bouncing Souls

It's a song called "Prey" which repeats itself over and over for 21 minutes. Maybe I'm missing the whole glory to the guys, but they sound a little sloppy. But if you're into sick grind, hook up! - Phil Pinto

R.B. BURNSIDE - *Sound Machine Groove* (HMG/Hightone Records 220 4th Street, #101. Oakland, CA. 94607) You've heard the stuff with the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, now go back and listen to a man with the blues. This is material taken from '79 and '80 with his family as the backup band aptly named the Sound Machine. I recommend this, but I must warn you, if ya don't like Blues music (especially Mississippi Delta style), then don't buy this. After all, it takes a real man to sing about his pain...slowly. -Gary McGarvey Jr.

BUSH TETRAS - *Beauty Lies* (Tim Kerr/Mercury) At last. Fourteen years after the release of their last single, Bush Tetras finally put out a full length album. And it's all new stuff, and here's the real bonus: The band is back together and playing out. So for all of you people who were too young or too in the dark to see them in the New Wave/No Wave heyday, keep your eyes out for a chance to see these indy pioneers live. The 13 songs here come across as good as vintage Bush Tetras but you won't find any freezer burn here, all these musicians have continued to develop and the new songs bring fresh ideas to their very original sound. Singer Cynthia Sley is back on the scene with a force that makes a mockery of all those angry-girl hitmakers. Pat Place's guitar carves out uncharted territory over the ever-quirky rhythm section of Dee Pop and Laura Kennedy. You think you can dance to this? You better have a brand new pair of shoes. - Alex Saville

...**BUT ALIVE** - *Bis Jetzt Ging Alles Gut...* (G-7 Records, Box 3 905 Corydon, Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R3C-3S3) I am obviously not too bright, for it took me about ten minutes to realize that this record title was not in English. Scary, I know, but this German band is worth listening to, despite the language barrier, and the guys were nice enough to translate their lyrics into English. This record is performed entirely in German, but it gives you an interesting insight into the minds of young frustrated German punks. One thing that stood out for me was the fact that the songs here address many of the same issues that American bands do, such as society ("These are the 90's Baby"), politics ("Free") and questions about success ("Sell-Out vs. Ghetto Romance"). Musically, there is nothing flashy here with the band obviously growing up on a steady diet of Ramones, combining 3 chord speed with a pop touch. You have heard more interesting and talented playing, but songs like "Pete", a scathing attack on one-time rebel Pete Townshend, and their version of Propagandhi's "Refusing to be a Man" proves that punk is universal. - Rich Quinlan

BUTTERCUP - *Love* (Spirit of Orr) Generic collection of rootsy country-pop that's closely modeled after the work of "No Depression" icons like Gram Parsons, the Jayhawks, and Wilco. The songs are generally uninspired, but the band's laid-back attitude is quite enjoyable until you realize that the songs all sound like slightly amped-up Eagles tunes. - Rob Thornton

BY THE GRACE OF GOD - *Perspective* (Victory) Rebellion for the sake of rebellion is futile, rebellion for the sake of making a change is By The Grace Of God. Musically slower than the first album, but its lyrics are twice as biting. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

CANDIRIA - *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (Too Damn Hype, P.O. Box 15793, Philadelphia, PA 19183) More insanity from these guys, mixing Hardcore, Jazz, Rock, and Blues into an amazing mix of impossible time signatures, rapping, etc. This album, as with their past releases, amazes the hell outta me because there's so much to it; all the beats, offbeat timings, percussion, and yet it still has the hard edge to it. Definitely out there; shove this in Les Claypool's face! -Phil Pinto

CARLOS - *Bigger Teeth* (Headhunter/Cargo) There is something interesting about watching musical opposites attempt to mesh together. Such is the case with Carlos, who play aptly titled "noise pop". For once, if you want to label a style of music, this is correct. The four boys here churn out ridiculously harmonious riffs and vocals with such fluidity that you sometimes do not even notice how much they rock. The album opener, "She Speaks Fluently" is a perfect example. A beefy riff wraps itself around the song but does not strangle it; instead, the other members explore a more soaring delivery, culminating in the nearly screamed chorus. "Paper Can be Burned", "Steamroller" and "Lisa Said So" are other examples of pop goodness mixed with a tinge of anger. There are instances where the band does become a little too sugary sweet, but that is to be expected, because

through all the noise, Carlos is purely a fun loving pop band. This is a definite departure for Cargo and I for one am glad they took the chance. - Rich Quinlan

THE CARTELS - *Kingpin* (Outlaw record, s#101-1001 W.Broadway, det. 400, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6H 4E4) WOAHHH!! Watch out kids! These three Vancouver-bred boys are only concerned with cool hair, fast cars and rock n' roll, and *Kingpin* is one rollicking, gutsy record. The Cartels deliver punk-tinged rockabilly that has a marvelous old-time attitude, particularly on the romping "I Miss You" and the Ramones-like "Hanna Don't Cry". The album does hit a rut after a handful of tracks, but then kicks back into high gear on "Schizophreniac" and "Bad Memory". Each song is in and out in a hurry taking a no-frills, no filler approach. This thing is just begging to be played loud. Do yourself the favor and try this out! - Rich Quinlan

CAUSE FOR ALARM - *Birth After Birth* (Victory Records, PO Box 146546, Chicago IL 60614) Back in the day, CFA ruled as kings of the New York hardcore scene. Now, nearly fifteen years later, they take that raw energy of 80's hardcore and thrust it into the late 90's. Hardcore since its infancy has been built around a combination of powerful messages and passionate music, and CFA delivers both on *Birth After Birth*. Rhythmic, poignant and fierce, this disc should be used as a guideline for any young hardcore act out there today - this is how it should sound. "Cold", "Birth After Birth" and "Killing Children" are ferocious examples of this band's chilling intensity, without an ounce of nostalgia. I was not old enough to remember these guys back in their early days, but thanks to Victory, I can fully enjoy their power now. - Rich Quinlan

CELIBATE RIFLES - *On the Quiet* LP (Munster Records, Apdo.18107-28080, Madrid-Spain) The Celibate Rifles have long been one of Australia's most respected acts, while being somewhat of an unknown product here in the States. This record does not feature the Rifles at their loudest, but instead is a collection of gruff, acoustic versions of some their favorite songs. Tracks like "Back on the Corner", "No Sign" and "Jesus on TV" have a charming, rough around the edges feel that makes you long to hear them at full power. The band beefs up its sound by plugging in for a few covers. "Boys(What did the Detective say?)", originally by the Sports and "Hot Generation" from the Tails capture a sense of crunchy pub rock. This one will take some hunting, but it is well worth the effort. - Rich Quinlan

CHARMING - *Giant* (Tweekitten, 1547 Palos Verdes Mall #213, Walnut Creek, CA 94596) This bands reminds me of early 10,00 Maniacs. Twelve emotional, slow songs. My girlfriend loves this disc. Nicole St. Clair Stoons does a great job with the vocals. - Denis Sheehan

CHERRY POPPIN' DADDIES - *Zoot Suit Riot* (Mojo) So you went to the Warped Tour and loved Royal Crown Revue and you bought Squirrel Nut Zippers only to realize they are relatively boring, but you now like big-band swing music. Well, the ever benevolent me has got another group for you to try. This here disc is a collection of all the songs Cherry Poppin' Daddies have done in a swing style (they do have four other albums out), which is where I recommend they stay. I like this one. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

CHRIST ON CRUTCH - *Shit Edge And Other Songs For The Young And Sentimental* (New Red Archives Box 210501, San Francisco, CA 94121) Sixteen songs from 1988 to 1995 brought together on one disc. Most of the songs are hardcore punk. Two songs, "Summer" and "Song For a Slab Of Pork", are slower and have a jazzy feel to them. All of the songs are good and are very political. "Will Of The Masses" is great. - Denis Sheehan

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE A.D. - *Speed Freaks* (Motherbox Records, 60 Denton Ave.- East Rockway, NY 11518) Well this CD showed up at my apartment all cracked and broken. It looked like somebody had kicked it's ass. Well, needless to say it was pissed off. With 17 tracks of blistering punk metal there's enough anger and angst here to help you vent even the worst of days. You wouldn't take these guys home to meet mother, unless she looked a lot like Dennis Rodman or owned a t-shirt with the Accused written anywhere on it. - Chris Duncan

CHUCK - *Westward Ho!* (Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest St. #3545, Westminster, CA. 92683) Chuck plays speedy punk pop in a standard Cali-style that will remind most of Face to Face. The two acts started their careers at roughly the same time and Chuck borrows heavily from that sound, however, they do retain their own individuality. Musically, this is

more record reviews

fairly common fodder, however, clever, biting lyrics help drive songs like "Ribbons", and "Punk Rock Face". Each song chugs along in a similar style, which should generate sing alongs live, but becomes repetitive on record. There is a touch of Descendents here, but Chuck seems a bit too programmed and not as relaxed or happily sloppy like Milo and his boys. All Cali-punk fans should dig this, and truth be told, I enjoyed the ride of listening to this. There is just too much of it. - Rich Quinlan

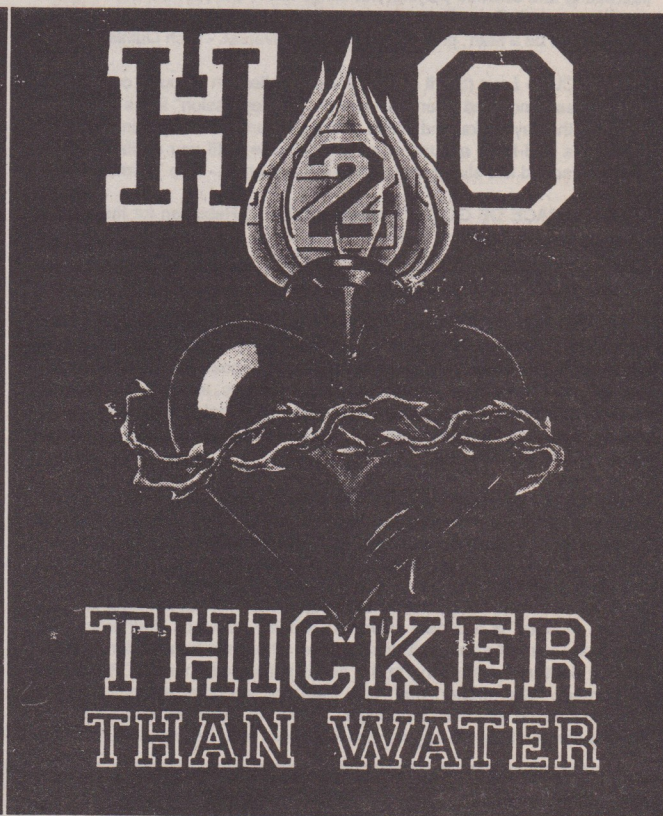
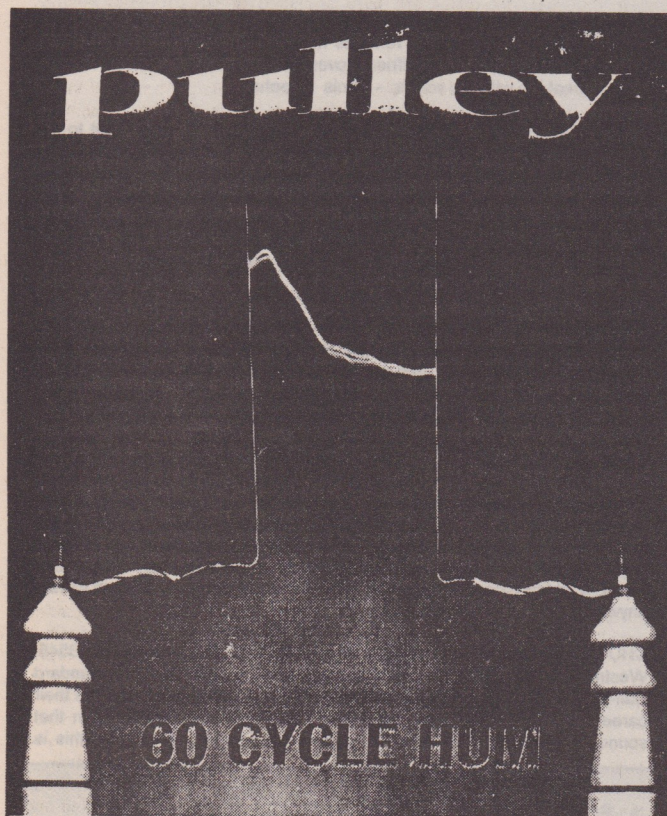
CHUMBAWAMBA - *Tubthumper* (Universal) Mr. Johnny Puke says, "I would dance to this in a club, like I danced to Howard Jones in the Eighties." And Johnny is not known for his dancing. Chumbawamba is catchy as hell and they're super-big in Europe, yet still unknown in the States (the band hails from Leeds, England, by the way.) They play pop-dancehall via Crass, with dueling male-female vocals, and did I mention they're catchy? If you know the band already, this major label debut has that unmistakable Chumbawamba sound; if you've never heard them, you should at least check this out at your local CD store's listening station and see if it doesn't set your combat boots to tapping. Self-described 'anarcho-pop-punkers,' they throw some techno and dance into the mix to create a sound that suggests the Pet Shop Boys jamming with Elastica while tripping on acid and discussing politics, censorship, and the evils of Capitalism. - Scott Eastman

CITIZENS' UTILITIES - *No More Medicine* (Mute Records) Life is often referred to as one long, winding, unpredictable journey; this sophomore album from a Seattle-based, country-tinged pop-rock foursome captures and conveys that philosophical take on life with lovely, heart-melting eloquence and poignancy. A remarkably cohesive, intricately woven work which uses the concept of being on the road and toolin' around America as a solid connective thread throughout the disc's 14 tracks, the album hits a sweet, euphonious, free-flowin' groove with the opening cut, the wryly thoughtful "She Taught Me Everything There Is to Know About Poultry," and maintains it to the very end with the beautifully bummed-out title song, thanks to the exquisitely crystal clear vocal harmonies, the melodic, slowly driving arrangements (the bass flute solo in "Northern Lights" is a breathtaking highlight), the neatly polished production, and the touchingly reflective tone evident in every song (the idiosyncratic truckers' anthem "They Had No Peers (Up to Here)" cops top honors here). A gentle, beguiling, nicely laid-back little jewel. - Joe Wawrzyniak

CLAIRMEL - *Fair Weather Fan* LP (No Idea Records, PO Box 14636 ,Gainesville, FL 32604-0502) This is a record full of impressively pounding-yet-melodic punk delivered by some boys from Tampa. The majority of the work here is standard guitar-driven punk, but I was stunned with the level of harmony here amid a sound that normally would not allow such pleasantries. This is not poppy punk, however. Richie, Don, Paul and Dave can clearly rock and do so throughout all twelve tracks. Things get off to a slow start, but by the time I flipped the record over, I was hooked. The second side is a more consistent sounding collection of songs, with the band really shining on "West of Willow" and "Predator and Prey". Intelligent, somewhat introspective lyrics accompany the raucous playing, but do not seem out of place. The band only stumble is the album's closer "Super Duper Popper", which should have been left off the record. However, overall, I finished this platter satisfied and impressed. Great effort here, and another cool release from No Idea. - Rich Quinlan

GILBY CLARKE - *The Hangover* (Paradigm Records, 67 Irving Place South 3rd Floor New York, NY 10003) Best known as a guitarist with Guns'N'Roses, ace axe man Clarke proves that he can more than hold his own all by his lonesome with his sterling, stirring sophomore solo album. Wrapping his fiery, cutting guitar playing and raggedy-ass singing around punchy, catchy, watertight melodies, a smooth, sparkling production, big, meaty, captivating hooks, a bluesy, bittersweet sound which pays tribute to early 80's heavy metal without reducing it to sappy nostalgia, a hauntingly wistful tone, and a hefty helping of raw, unbridled enthusiasm, Clarke strongly affirms both rock music's extraordinary staying power and its equally amazing ability to help one endure hardships no problem. Whether he's belting out such sturdy originals as "Zip Gun" and "Captain Chaos" or doing appropriately rugged covers of David Bowie's "Hang Onto Yourself" and the Beatles' "Happiness Is A Warm Gun," Clarke keeps things cracking throughout, offering up a tough, tasty, et somehow oddly tender and often quite elegiac album in the process. A good, gritty, "I'm still going" diamond in the rough. - Joe Wawrzyniak

COCKEYED GHOST - *Neverest* (Big Deal Records, P.O. Box # 2072 Peter Stuyvesant Station New York, NY 10009-9998) Pop-punk is becoming a very popular musical fad; this delightfully exuberant Los Angeles band prove that this inspired synthesis of two allegedly contradictory music styles is definitely a very good thing. The opinionated, outspoken point of view, boundless vitality, marvelously mischievous sense of humor ("I'm OK,



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You're Not OK" mercilessly mocks elitist trendoid assholes, "Halo Boy" sticks it to arrogant rock superstars, and "Buzz" pokes fun at those music industry jerks who decide the latest musical flavor of the month), articulate, wickedly clever lyrics, piquant eye for unusual slice-of-life stories ("Koreatown" is a truly devastating vignette), and boldly idiosyncratic, experimental sensibility are pure punk, while the catchy, infectious, hook-laden arrangements, exquisite falsetto vocal harmonies which are gloriously redolent of the Beach Boys, the sumptuously polished production, and the sometimes light, uplifting tne ("Special" exudes pure joy from the very first bar) represent this foursome's highly becoming pop side. Together, these surprisingly compatible music styles make for a terrific, tuneful, irresistible record which proves that Cockeyed Ghost is a pop-punk group you should keep your ears open for. - Joe Wawrzyniak

COLD CUT - *Let Us Play* (Ninja Tune) Coldcut are the pinnacle of the art of the DJ. Their latest full-length effort is a masterpiece. "Timber" is composed of various samples of axes, hand saws, power saws, chains saws, and heavy equipment designed to destroy trees. It's well executed, technically very cool, and beautifully haunting all at the same time. Other songs on this disc range from the ambient techno of "Music for No Musicians" to the electric funk of "Space Journey" to the heavy-duty DJ mixing of "More Beats and Pieces." Also included are spoken word pieces set to music, featuring the rip at the club scene, called "Noah's Toilet" and yet another Jello Biafra rant that hits right on the mark, called "Every Home a Prison." This album also comes with a second disc which is a CD-ROM, featuring eight music videos, a trivia quiz, info, pictures, and a few interactive toys you can use to make music and video art. This album receives my highest recommendation. - Paul Silver

COMET GAIN - *Sneaky* (Beggars Banquet) Although around since 1993, this group which strangely got associated with the whole riot grrl scene, ostensibly due to John Slade of Huggy Bear's presence on guitar. Very much a pop band with socialist sensibilities. And it's those sensibilities which keep them from completely disappearing into pop sweetness. Their Say Yes! (To International Socialism) single is infectious and much more fun to listen to than pompous politicians. If you like smart pop bands and still eat raw sugar, then Comet Gain are for you. - Alex Saville

COMMANDER VENUS - *The Uneventful Vacation* (Thick Records, 916 N. Damon, Chicago IL 60622) As I listened to this disc, I found the lyrics very deep and emotional. Needless to say how shocked I was when I found out singer/songwriter Conor Oberst is only 17! I did like the lyrics and the Sunny Day Real Estate sounding music. However, all the songs follow the same recipe. Slow start, pick up a bit, slow down again, then pick up even faster. Conor's vocals also sound too fuzzy at times and his screeching makes me think he is popping vocal chords left and right. - Denis Sheehan

CONNIE DUNGS (Mutant Pop, 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis OR 97330) For all of you that have the liner book that comes with this CD, FYI, "fag" is a good word because gay people are rad. Besides that, lots of songs about girls (3), fast beatin' punk rock, with a soft Joe "Queer"-ish voice. - Eva Silverman

COUSIN OLIVER - *818* (Drive-Thru Records, P.O. Box 46115, Hollywood CA 90046) This band is simply amazing. Catchy and upbeat ska to get you skanking all over the place. Good lyrics that are funny and heartfelt. This band is probably one of the best combinations of punk and ska that I have heard. Drive-Thru Records is quickly becoming one of my favorite labels and should be one of yours too. Go pick this one up and put it on at 7 in the morning before school and you'll be feeling so good that you will be acing the tests and getting all the fine girls just thinking about their music. - Conor Moore

CRAZY ALICE - *Hey Jimmy, Have a Great Summer* (Catapult Records, 215 A Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02210) Loud and rowdy pop-rock, sometimes with a garage-edge to it. This is the kind of music you pop into the CD player when you're having a party or cruising in the car. This should be the soundtrack to the 90s versions of those grade-B T&A flicks they show on the USA Network about life in highschool. Plenty of energy and plenty of fun. - Paul Silver

CRISIS - *The Hollowing* (Metal Blade) 3-piece band with this girl that rips it up on the vocals. From the picture, she looks all innocent, but from the beginning song, you can tell she's not fuckin' around. Real slow n' heavy metal with elements of Sabbath as far as the music. - Phil Pinto

CYPHER IN THE SNOW (Candy-Ass Records, P.O. Box 42382, Portland, OR 97242) - Flawed but intriguingly eclectic attempt by some female queercore vets to combine punk rock attitude, humor, gender politics, and satire in the spirit of the Dead Kennedys. Unfortunately, the band's song-writing is really uneven and they have a hard time being both funny and

serious on the same CD. The best satirical tune is "Cigarette Picnic," which takes on anorexia, but the Cypher gang are at their best on a few tunes about life from a queer perspective like "Rent-A-Gash" and "Fake Flowers". - Rob Thornton

DARK FUNERAL - *The Secrets of the Black Arts* (Death Records, 2828 Cochran St. #302, Simi Valley CA 93065-2793). Black Metal done at its best? I wouldn't know, to me it's just a bunch of guys in black, worshipping Satan, and screaming in high-pitched voices. That's about it! - Phil Pinto

DEAD BY DAWN - *After I Eat Your Brains* (P.O. Box 90057, 1436 Queen St. West Toronto, Ontario) What the fuck is going on today?! Music that's been played over and over again, lyrics that are totally predictable, screechy vocals from hell, and the image: a more subtle version of fuckin' Marilyn Manson! I think they use the words "shit" and "fuck" to try to be hard cause they use them enough. It totally threw me off because the cover, album title, and song titles are actually all right, but one listen and you'll drop dead. Don't bother! -Phil Pinto

DEAD END KIDS - *Gonna Find Me Some New Drooges* (Kevin Allee Records, PO Box 2510, Ft. Charlotte FL 33949) Bratty low-fi punk with lead guitars and wiseguy lyrics. It reminded me a little of early Social D and a little of early Screeching Weasel, with the songs split between jokey numbers like "Elvis" (who stops at the singer's drive-thru window for a burger) and teen street anthems like "Dead End Kids" and "Deceived." There's a Stranglers cover for all you Old School fans but (I'm just guessing here) the band itself is probably more in the Middle School range. - Jim T.

DEAD MOON - *Hard Wired in Ljubljana* (eMPty Records, PO Box 12 Seattle, WA 98102) Beginning in the mid-60's with several seminal garage rock groups (the Lords, the Weeds, the Lollipop Shop), continuing in the 70's with such diverse bands as the R&B ensemble King Bee and the punk rock outfit the Rats, and still going in the 80's with the C&W band Western Front, venerable rock music jack-of-all-trades Fred Cole has proven to be an amazingly versatile and durable fellow. Cole delivers here with both fists swingin', scoring a powerhouse sonic gut-punch with this raw, bluesy, beautifully bleak and bitter 20 track album culled from blazingly right-on live performances given in Europe and the Northwest. Cole's latest group, the minimalist garage-punk threesome Dead Moon, are an incredibly ragged, hard-edged bunch: Cole's hoarse, quivery vocals, bile-ridden lyrics, and jagged, fuzzed-out guitar are pure strangled spew. Drummer Andrew Loomis keeps the beat subdued, but steady, and Toody's gutty bass licks supply lethal undertow as the band tears loose with such great, gritty, extremely downbeat and severely hurtin' songs as the anguished "Going South," the heart-wrenching "Killing Me," the incendiary "Fire in the Western World," and the killer anthem "Diamonds in the Rough," tossing in stomp-ass covers of "Milkcow Blues Boogie" and "Play With Fire" for good measure. Tough, tortured, and terrific, this perfectly grungy 'n' greasy wonder pounds mightily with a worn, scruffy, tattered, but still strong, defiant, and resilient rock'n'roll heart. Essential. -Joe Wawrzyniak

DEFTONES - *Around the Fur* (Maverick) Slightly less angry than their 1st album and slightly less gurgley. The Deftones have stayed with the formula that got them popular and I have no problem with that. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

DELPHY - *Heatseeking* (Delphy, 245 8th Ave., Suite 214, New York, NY 10011) The press release claims that this is indie rock, "blending American alternative with British pop sensibilities and New Zealand no fuss attitude." The only thing "indie" I can see about it is that the band released this themselves. The only thing "alternative" about this is that it probably will not be easily available in the record stores. The only thing "sensible" about it is that it's short (only six songs equals less pain). The only thing "no fuss" about it is that I won't bother listening to it again. This is commercial rock, plain and simple and boring. The songs are loaded with cock-rock style guitar solos, the songs are all mid-tempo, and so on. This reminds me of the worst of the stadium rock bands of the 70s and 80s. - Paul Silver

DEMONSPEED - *Swing Is Hell* (Black Pumpkin Records, PO Box 4377 River Edge, NJ 07661-4377) This awesomely uninged Big Apple quartet rock the house, the Casbah, and every other building you can think of with a deliciously dementoid vengeance on this utterly cracked 7 song EP monstrosity. The music is basically intensely cookin' lounge schlock cranked to the lethal max with a murderous, massive blast of blisteringly hot, burning'n'churning battering ram-style rock'n'roll, combining emotive, hilariously deadpan sub-Elvis Presley smarmball vocals, surging guitars, crazed keyboards, severely palpitating drums, and splendidly sicko subject matter -- serial killers, deceased TV stars, social decay, and other such way out there fare -- into one heady, hell-raising synthesis. Wonderfully wacked-out and constantly swingin', this sublimely nutty outing is the absolute mother-fuckin' shit, man. - Joe Wawrzyniak

DIMESTORE HALOES (V.M.L. Records, PO Box 183, Franklin Park IL 60131) This is pure, raunchy punkabilly from Cambridge, Massachusetts of all places. To truly get a feel for where this band is coming from, all you have to do is listen to their true to the original version of Hank Williams Jr.'s "Your Cheatin' Heart". This disc is full of old Telecaster rock mixed with blues swagger, country twang and early rock sing along lyrics. The Haloes still believe that rock n' roll means rebellion, and it does not have to include piercings and tattoos. You can taste the frustration on tracks like "Twenty Something Bad", "Beat Your Heart Out" and the scathing "Hate My Generation". Other offerings that will not let you down are "Heartbreak Gin", and "American Speed". If you can imagine Gene Vincent singing for Social Distortion, you are on the on the right path to appreciating what is happening here. Let's face it, when you strip away all the extras, if you want good rock n' roll, you need two things: strong guitar playing and boundless energy. The Dimestore Haloes understand this and translate it into an old fashioned rock experience. - Rich Quinlan

DIANOGAH - *As Seen from Above* (OhioGold, PO Box 25441, Chicago, IL 60625-9998) Beautifully played and beautifully recorded. Dianogah play music that meanders. One would think that a band consisting of two basses and drums wouldn't sound like much, but one would be desperately wrong. Dianogah create a full rich sound with minimal instrumentation. Their debut full-length album finally gives them an opportunity to stretch out and relax, so to speak. And this is the perfect music for the listener to do the same. The smooth, flowing songs, primarily instrumental, and the clean sound engineering (by Steve Albini) produce a soothing, calming effect. Highly recommended. - Paul Silver

PAT DINIZIO - *Pat DiNizio* (Velvet Records, 740 Broadway, New York NY 10003) Former Smithereens frontman DiNizio brings his velvety-smooth vocals and trademark goatee to this solo debut, stretching out a bit, musically, from his former band while somehow sounding pretty much the same. With typically solid production from Don Dixon (a talent who also knows his way around a pop song), DiNizio's self-titled effort adds a few shades of jazz bebop and lounge sleaze to his usual sixties-influenced pop/rock song structure. Still, fans of the aforementioned New Jersey foursome will find little to dislike here, with songs like "Running Jumping Standing Still," "Everyday World" and "You Should Know" offering the same sort of lyrical innocence and engaging, radio-friendly hooks that they've come to expect from Mr. DiNizio's work. - ReverendK

THE DINNER IS RUINED - *Elevator Music For Non-Claustrophobic People* (Sonic Unyon, P.O. Box 57347, Jackson Station, Hamilton Ontario Canada L8P 4X2) At times assaulting the senses with horrible, atonal noise and other times mesmerizing the listener with an ambient tapestry of sound, *Elevator Music For Non-Claustrophobic People* is as frustrating to listen to as it is intriguing. Musical deconstructionists with an eye on the millennium and their ear to the tracks of a rapidly-derailing society, The Dinner Is Ruined are nothing if not unique. Scraps of vocals, discordant melodies, raging guitar lines, feedback and playful instrumental interludes infect these loose-knit "songs," creating a different listening experience with each sitting. If the apocalypse had a soundtrack, this very well might be it. - Reverend K

DISCOUNT - *Half Fiction* (Kat Records, P.O. Box 46092, Escondido CA 92046) Well, it seems like everyone and their favorite cast member from the Wonder Years likes this band. I agree, sort of. Reminds me of Jawbreaker with female vocals but it's poppier. I'm not the best person to review this because I usually hate every band with female vocals but I can deal with this. 14 songs weighing in at 31:17; if that don't turn ya on, ask Jersey Beat for the picture of me in Billy Buck's mom's zebra lingerie. - Conor Moore

DISMEMBER - *Misanthropic* (Nuclear Blast) Apparently, the only happy, God-fearing people in Sweden are the ones who do those Ricola commercials. This 5 song EP contains every element of what makes great death metal. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

DK3 - *Neutrons* (Quarterstick Records, PO Box 25342, Chicago, IL 60625) The Denison/Kimball Trio has changed its name to DK3, changed record labels, and gone from a duo to a quartet for their new album. Joining Duane and James are reed master Ken Vandermark on several tracks and Tom Bicky on recorder on one track. The disc opens with "Downriver", with driving rhythms and cool, ambient background. "Monte's Casino" is an upbeat, ba-bop influenced tune. Other tracks range from otherworldly soundscapes to manic jazz and in-between. Cool, out of the ordinary disc. - Paul Silver

DRAGS - *Stop Rock And Roll* (Estrus) Albuquerque is becoming a hot-bed of punk rock and blues-tinged garage band The Drags are at the forefront of that scene. The 12 songs on this release are in the same vein



Pat DiNizio

as their excellent earlier Dragsploitation EP. Songs like "Tastes Like Poison" and "Conspiracy" should be considered classics of this genre. Few bands into this sound do it as well as these guys and gal. - Rick Spithoff

DREAM CITY FILM CLUB (Beggars Banquet) Another Peter Murphy rip off/copycat from the UK. These guys make Morrissey seem like a cheerful dude. - Denis Sheehan

DROPKICK MURPHYS - *Boys On The Docks* (Cyclone Records, 24 Pheasant Run, Merrimack NH 03054) Here's the 90s street-punk you ordered, in a six-song release. The EP starts off with the title tune, dedicated to Boston labor innovator John Kelly with lyrics by bassist Ken Casey and music by guitarist Rick Barton. "The boys on the docks needed John for sure/When they came to this country he opened the door/He said men I'll tell ya they don't like our kind/Though it starts with a fist it must end with your mind." Then it rockets on from there, approaching hardcore once, and getting angry just when you need, like *Euro-Trash*, dedicated to the "trendy, spoiled bastards who listen to shitty music." Memorable punk moments, with good vocals and excellent songwriting. Play it twice each time. - ChuckX

DWARVES - *The Dwarves Are Young And Good Looking* (Greedy/Epitaph) Am I mistaken or is this the same CD that's been out for a while on Theologian? No matter, this record flat out rocks, clear production and fast rockin' beats make all 25 minutes a great listen. Sure, it's not the same old fast 'n' snarly Dwarves of *Blood, Guts & Pussy* but they rock just the same. Yes, folks, the Dwarves have gone sensible and now they're doing pop-punk songs about girls. They've even learned to play better and incorporate some blues and swing ("You Gotta Burn") and the more traditional sounds of country and punk gone fast ala' Supersuckers. I wonder how long their sets are these days? - Johnny Puke

DYNAMITE BOY - *Hell Is Other People* (Offtime Records, P.O. Box 220763, El Paso TX 79913) Foot tappin', heart beatin' pop punk by four cute guys who know how to make worthy music. Fun boys who thank Pansy Division and Less Than Jake on their record. You go boys! - Eva Silverman

EL DOPA - 1332 (East Bay Menace Records PO Box 3313 Oakland CA 94609) This hardcore/metal outfit borrows heavily from the metal side of things with vocals that attempt, but fail miserably to achieve a grindcore sound. This makes for a loud, but terribly sloppy release. The riffs are stuck treading water in the mid-80's, as El Dopa sounds as if they are trying to imitate their favorite early Slayer records. The band goes as far as to have a demon face with a pentagram on his forehead as their insignia. Scary. El Dopa needs much more time in their garage rehearsing before putting such wastes of time like "Decomposing", "Clawing at the Walls", and "Someone saw God" on a CD. It releases like this that make me cringe, for there are so many talented, determined bands in the world that deserve record deals, who toil in obscurity, never getting the money to put out a CD, and yet, this stuff sees the light of day. Avoid this at all costs. - Rich Quinlan

ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN - *Action High* (One Louder Records, PO Box 1NW Newcastle Upon Tyne NE99 1NW UK) EF plays fast, upbeat energetic punk fare with plentiful hooks. This is high octane music, nothing too substantial and it will certainly not alter your life, but it's fun, solid and easy to like. *Action High* will remind you of a lot of other bands, but for some reason that did not bother me. EF blasts their way through giddy songs like "Pure And Simple", "Born Wild" and "Back At You" with such passionate playfulness that you cannot help but enjoy. Granted, there is a ton of this stuff out there, but for those of you who like your punk free from preaching and politics, add this to your mounting collection. - Rich Quinlan

EMPEROR - *Anthems To The Welkin At Dusk* (Century Media) Church burning aside, I would have to say that Emperor are one of the best metal bands today. There's a certain intensity that comes through the music whether they play at full speed to cave your head in, or slow down to rip off your face. This is one band to own if you are a purveyor of the darkest of metal. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

EUPHONE (Hefty Records, PO Box 597844, Chicago, IL 60659-7844) Ryan Rapsys, formerly of Gauge and now with Sweater Weather, releases a "solo" album, in which he's assisted on various tracks by a variety of musicians from other bands. And whereas the bands he's played in have traditionally been more DC influenced emo-core, this disc leans more toward the jazzy improv-pop of Tortoise or Directions in Music. While not as complex and innovative as those two organizations, Euphone, nonetheless, provides an enjoyable instrumental disc. Drums are a main feature of most all the tracks, as this is Ryan's primary instrument, but there's plenty of organ, guitar, and other keyboards and instruments to create interesting textures and atmospheres. - Paul Silver

EVERCLEAR - *So Much For the Afterglow* (Capitol) It is said in musical circles that it matters not the contemporary style of music that remains, only the quality behind it. This is true of Everclear. I've heard people say that their time is over; I say "listen to the lyrics and tell me if it's still finished." *Afterglow* is equal to *Sparkle & Fade* (their last album) in every respect. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

EVELYN FOREVER - *Nightclub Jitters* (The Airplay Label, PO Box 851, Asbury Park NJ 07712) This debut CD by New Brunswick's Evelyn Forever is guaranteed to brighten your day and slap a smile on your face, with 10 fizzy power-pop tunes that sparkle with sugary-sweet, boyish three-part harmonies and bouncy singalong melodies. From the winsome yearning of "What I Need" ("what I need is a girl, simple simple,") to the giddy "Wonderful" to the twenty-something angst of "17" ("I'm too old for this, I don't know what it means,") rhythm guitarist Mark Sanderlin and bassist Eddie Yoo celebrate the innocent joys and sorrows of growing up and falling in love as they trade off lead vocals. Sheriff "Reef" Fanous chimes in with harmonies and stinging guitar leads - he's the George Harrison of this Fab Four - while drummer Matt Lewis keeps it all moving along with a solid backbeat. As they sing in one of their songs, it's sweeter than double dip, and I want some more. - Jim Testa

EXTREME NOISE TERROR - *Damage 381* (Earache) New album by - as the CD says - the "total grind" side project that includes Barney Greenway of N-Death. 10 songs of speed and fury with 3 vocalists. All brutal as fuck, but with their own style of microphone assault. Awesome, definitely pick it up! - Phil Pinto

FEARLESS FREAP - *No Less Sordid* (Mag Wheel Records, P.O. Box 115, Station R, Montreal, Quebec Canada H2S 3K6) If Nik Turner and that guy from the Bevis Frond had a love child, it would be Fearless Freap. Mixing hazy rhythms with chanting spaceman guitar riffs and relentless wall-of-sound production, Fearless Freap's *No Less Sordid* tills the frequently-trodden musical turf of dark, foreboding pop. Throwing in just enough hooks on songs like "Whole Towns Happened" and "Something Wrong" to keep the records company execs happy, the Freapsters follow a hallowed musical lineage that began, perhaps, with Sun Ra, worked its way through dozens of sixties-era psychedelic blues bands like Moby Grape and finally "invented" modern alt-rock through the works of legends like Husker Du and the Meat Puppets. Definitely a band to keep an eye on (and not to be confused with the dissimilar Nashville band of the same name). - Rev. K

THE FEDS - *Chicago Bureau* (Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 7000-177 Alta Loma, CA 91701) As far as music is concerned, Chicago's better known as a capitol of the blues than as a hotbed for loud, angry, snarling punk rock noise. Well, the terrifically ticked-off trio of Mark Piss, Ken Weevil, and Louie prove that the concept of Windy City punk is by no means a bad thing as they break loose with one awesomely aggressive trashy 'n' thrashy track after another, gleefully bludgeoning the listener with a powerhouse mixture of rage, disgust, regret, and discontent that's articulated with relentlessly embittered lyrics and delivered by a ferocious, unrelenting, wrap-your-hands-around-someone's-neck-and-wring-that-sucker-like-a-fuckin'-chicken blitzkrieg aural assault. Starting with a jolting, high-decibel shrieking of "Fuck you!" and concluding with the skull-shredding all-out nihilistic anti-patriotism of "Wasted Life," this wickedly dead-on album never lets up for a minute. Exhilarating, exhaustive, and, without question, pretty goddamn excellent as well. - Joe Wawryzniak

FILM - *Futurama* (Black Cat Records, 10 New Friendship Rd., Howell, NJ 07731) "Hanging Over Me," the second track on the disc, is kind of a cross between jangly garage pop and top 40 music. It's probably the strongest track on this disc of weak Wannabe pop trash. Wanky guitar solos, bland arrangements, and unimaginative vocals add up to a truly uninspired release. - Paul Silver

FLICK - "Flick" EP (Columbia) Frankly, I think signing teenagers to major label contracts in the current market environment (in which "artist development" consists of "sign 'em, give 'em a shot, then drop 'em") borders on child abuse. But these 5 songs (previously released on a small midwestern indie) provide ample evidence that 14-year old Trevor Thornton, his 18 year old guitarist brother Oran, and the rest of these kids deserve their shot. Romantic, winsome, innocent and yet knowing, Flick's irresistible Nineties version of power-pop shimmers and bops with flavorful guitar effects, whipsnap drumming (from 16 year old Adam McGrath) and a chunky bass sound (from twentysomething Eve Hill). How ironic is it that Trevor's chipmunk voice recalls Mitch Easter back in the glory days of Lets Active, a band that made its first records around the time Trevor was starting to potty train? - Jim T.



Electric Frankenstein

FLIP-SIDE - *This, That and the Other Thing* (Mutiny Records, PO Box B New York, NY 10159-000B) Now here's a perfectly engaging, uplifting, and unassuming little charmer of a record. Effortlessly combining the loping rhythm and incessant beat of ska with a punchy, grungy rock sound, a delicately reflective and bittersweet pop sensibility, and a touchingly sincere humanistic warmth, this amiable Goshen, New York quartet deliver one bang-up cut after another, deftly alternating between pull-out-all-the-earth-shakin'-stops rockers ("Juliet" and "Luck" do that high-octane rockin' bit to the thrilling max) and more low-key, introspective ballads ("More Myself Than Me" and "Crying Time" are especially poignant). All in all, it's a very moving, likable, and worthwhile debut album. - Joe Wawryzniak

FLU THIRTEEN - *Spin Cycle* (ITU Records Interplanetary Truckers Union PO Box 648, New York, NY 10011) Seventeen years ago Devo advertised with the slogan: "The important sound of things falling apart." The Spud Boys never quite understood the blueprint of chaos as well as the twin-guitar spaceship of Flu Thirteen. Here is true industry: instruments that sound like machines, and four musicians who translate that noise into complex and beautiful patterns. Sharp and murky at the same time, dissonant chords with prominent edges cascade around jet propellant rhythm and four-G changes, sending subconscious messages to your psyche. The vocals cut across like the singer has a blender in his throat instead of vocal cords. Flu Thirteen are noticeably influenced by all the great indie guitar bands, despite this, they do it better than most. Try to get this out of your CD player. - Alex Saville

FLUFFER - "Wreck + 2" (Fear of Nebraska, 155 East 23rd St. Suite 305, New York, NY 10010) Very cool three song CD. Intense, both musically and lyrically, this disc delivers the right stuff. The title track is a dichotomy of hard driving math-like music and smooth, sweet vox. "Shelf Life" jumps back and forth between D.C. style post-emo indie pop and real heavy stuff, along the lines of L7 and 7 Year Bitch. "Slick" is a fast, noisy, garage punk tune with highly suggestive lyrics. 3 songs just ain't enough! - Paul Silver

FORAGAINST (Independent Project Records, Po Box 1033, Sedona, AZ 86339-1033) This wondrously lush record features pop gems that float out of your speakers. Everything about this release sets a mood without being unbearably moody. The nearly monotone singing of Jeffrey Runnings is supported by pristine guitar work by Steven Henrichs and the subtle aggression of drummer Paul Engelhard. This is another example of a band that you have never heard of that has a long history of great music. ForAgainst have been putting out gorgeous Brit-influenced pop for over ten years now with little recognition outside of their hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska. This release, with lovely sensitive cuts like "Wintersong", "Lost" and "Lilacs" just to name a few should earn this band more national attention. In addition, the band does a marvelous job covering East River Pipe's "Times Square Go-Go Boy". FA puts aside the angry guitars and uses the raw emotions that accompanies lost love and friendships to create their stirring songs. - Rich Quinlan

FORBIDDEN PLANET (Vixon, PO Box 3654, Silver Spring, MD 20918) These guys are heavily influenced by the late 70's glam rock scene. The vocals are way too fuzzy sounding for my taste. As I listened to this disc,

one 70's band kept on creeping into my mind: The Archies! Forbidden Planet is the 90's version of The Archies. - Denis Sheehan

THE FORCE - *I Don't Like You Either* (Spider Club Music, PO Box 11124, Whittier CA 90603) From Richard Nixon's hometown comes this forceful (pardon the pun) slice of old school hardcore/punk. Angry songs about apathy, cops, integrity, and personal politics fuel this disc. Look for them on tour this fall with AFI. - Jim T.

FORCE OF NATURE (Vernon Records, PO Box 243, Forked River, NJ. 08731) With the amount of heavy guitars and angular drumming that's on this, I hear a COC comparison happening. What also adds to this opinion are the clear and understandable vocals. Good stuff if you're into Kyuss, Fu Manchu, and a little Black Sabbath. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

THE 4 SQUARES AND TUCAN SLAM - *Doin' Snuff With Roy Scherer* (Quincy Shanks, PO Box 184, Wayne, IL 60184) Basic punk rock with annoying dia-

log clips from movies between the songs. Vocals slightly resemble a younger Greg Graffin of Bad Religion. None of the songs caught my ear. - Denis Sheehan

FOUR ROSE SOCIETY - *Blueprints To Destroy The Universe* (Whitehouse Records, PO Box 906183, Louisville KY 40209) Full on emcore from Kentucky with aggro vocals and melodies that brought back fond memories of old DC bands like Rites Of Spring and Marginal Man. If these guys ever play in town, I'm there! -Rick K.

FRAZZLE - *A Club Joint/Don't Ask* (D.I.G., P.O. Box 7562 Wilmington, DE 19803-0562) This potentially soothing, soulful, winding'n'grinding blue-eyed funk 12" inch CD single has just three songs on it, but the marvelously mellow trio of kicked-back tunes certainly delivers the groovyass goods: the smooth, relaxed, fully developed melodies build, evolve, and grow oh-so-nicely to supple, swirling crescendos, taking the listener on a mesmerizing sonic excursion that dips and dovetails into some pleasingly wigged-out aural areas, while the calmly bumpin' beat and coolly chuggin' rhythm maintain an even, easygoing course throughout. My only gripe: this clocks in at a much too short 17 minute length; it's so immensely listenable and satisfying that I wanted more. Hopefully these guys will come out with a complete album sometime soon. Until then this baby will have to do the trick, which it does exceptionally well. -Joe Wawryzniak

THE FROWNIES - *Amateur Dramatics For Professional Losers* (Farewell, PO Box 1885, Columbia SC 29202) The Frownies are a diverse little South Carolina trio in the new school pop vein. The sound is a combination of some parts which border on cliché (the ska breaks of the opening tune, "Package Deal," for instance), parts where they steal to their advantage (melodies borrowed from Weston on "Food Edge," "My Stupid Dick," and others.) They fall into that new category that's a mixture of straight edge styles, emo, and pop punk. None of the songs sound like the same band but great guitar and catchy melodies keep it all together. The drummer Jason (ex-Ground) sings a lot of, he leads, which is yet another quirk to this outfit. - Johnny Puke

FROM THE HILLS (Gas/Merkin Records, 310 East Biddle Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202) Bands which major in a wired, wacky mixture of bluegrass, gospel, and blues music ain't exactly a dime a dozen, so this openly redneck and damn proud of it Frizzellburg, Maryland quintet scores high points right off the bat for sheer novelty value alone. Thankfully, novelty value isn't the only attribute these shit-kickin' crackers possess: there's enough blazing, roof-rockin' energy cut loose here for a dozen all-night jamborees, lead singer Elvis T.'s hoarse, hair-raising holler is a nasty, gnarled wonder to behold, such favorite low-fi instruments as a banjo, bongos, a jug, a washboard, and a cowbell are well used throughout, a wonderfully off-the-wall sensibility (the songs address such oddball subjects as possums, wife killing, country fair auctions, wrecking your pick-up truck, and, naturally, getting plastered on cheap rotgut whiskey), no pretense to speak of, an amusingly rude'n'crude sense of humor, and a fabulous! direct, no-frills, unostentatious production that's light on razzle-dazzle and heavy on modest, plainspoken, downhome hillbilly soul. To sum this here review up, this is the perfect record for the boorish, ill-bred,

unabashed Bubba residing in each and every one of us. - Joe Wawrzyniak

FU MANCHU - *The Action Is Go* (Mammoth) Southern Californian skate/hard rock. Songs are generally about sci-fi, cars and pot. Very heavy guitars. Pretty good cover of SSD's "Nothing Done." - Denis Sheehan

FUNBOX - *V XX III* (Onefoot Records) Get ready for a heavy dose of sincerity. Canada's Funbox delivers breakneck-tempo pop-punk packed with sociopolitical messages focusing on the themes of compassion and unity. The guitars can be inventive as well as powerful and the singer slings lyrics with deft precision, never losing sight of the band's creed. Stridently, urgently, pleadingly, they sing about what is important to them. Maybe in a few years they'll look back and laugh at how naïve they were, but I'd like to think that maybe they'll also be able to take pride in the fact that some of what they preached helped make the world a little better. Hey, we're all trying to do the best we can. That's what keeps me here. - Jim T.

FUN PEOPLE - *Corazon* (Ugly Records, Cc 48 suc. 49 CP(1449) Buenos Aires Argentina) Fun People crank out very short, usually sloppy bursts of punk energy with a sugar coating. The lyrics are sung entirely in Spanish, but the translated lyric sheet demonstrates a band fueled by politics. Yet there are a few surprises here, particularly the story of a man searching for his life-long soul mate in "Love song", and the touching "Rainbow". The band is definitely at its best when it is challenging the status quo on the tracks "Justice", "Point of Lovely Sun" and "Not a Part of it Anymore". This is far from groundbreaking, but a strong rhythm section and passionate vocals carry this above average band through twenty-eight fleeting minutes. -Rich Quinlan

FUNKDOOBIE - *The Troubleshooters* (Buzztone Records, 1540 Broadway New York, NY 10036-4098) I have a confession to make; I'm not a real big admirer of rap music. I find the anger at work in rap highly alienating, mainly because said rage seems to feed more rage instead of working as some kind of catharsis. Fortunately, this album from a Los Angeles Puerto Rican rap outfit jettisons the anger altogether, putting a welcome, refreshing emphasis on a cheery, playful tone and a catchy, lively, hot and spicy Latino-flavored groove which keeps the beats a'boppin' and the funky, smoothly rolling rhythm a'flowin' on a continual basis. Further strengths include some raunched-up saxophone, a judicious, unobtrusive use of scratching, the neat way in which Sondoobie's vocals seamlessly fluctuate between singing in English and Spanish, the wickedly witty Diana Ross-inspired jam "Doobie Knows," and a stone-cold aces cover of Bill Withers' "The Anthem." Add a nicely wiggly sense of humor, a back-up female chorus that's so soulful that they border on the heavenly, and, best of all, a feeling of pure, unbridled joy that's as infectious as it is uplifting and enjoyable. In short, what we've got here is a nifty little hip-hop melting pot album in which all the diverse, disparate elements blend perfectly together into one delicious, delightful, hugely entertaining whole. -Joe Wawrzyniak

FURIOUS GEORGE - *Gets A Record* (Recess Records, P.O. Box 1112, Torrance CA 90505) Another band trying to be the Ramones and failing, badly. This one sucks and just makes me want to puke. I am damn surprised I was able to sit through this one. Most songs on this have four lines or less, no effort going on here. - Conor Moore

FUTURE BIBLE HEROES - *Lonely Days* (Slow River Records, Shetland Park, 27 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970) Cool, electronically enhanced, ethereal new wave. Includes a cover of the 1960s easy listening pop hit, "Love is Blue" that is both faithful to the original and creatively original itself, at the same time. "How to Get Laid in Japanese" sounds very much like a cheesey ballad taken right out of a Japanese anime film, which was probably the idea. "Berlin on \$10 a Day" is a beautiful, minimalist ambient piece. May be a bit cheesey for some, but just right for others. - Paul Silver

GARAGELAND - *Last Exit To Garageland* (Foodchain Records, 100 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 1830, Santa Monica, Ca 90401) 14 straight forward rock songs. Lots of slow ones. The second tune, "Fingerpops," is really cool. Sounds a lot like The Church. - Denis Sheehan

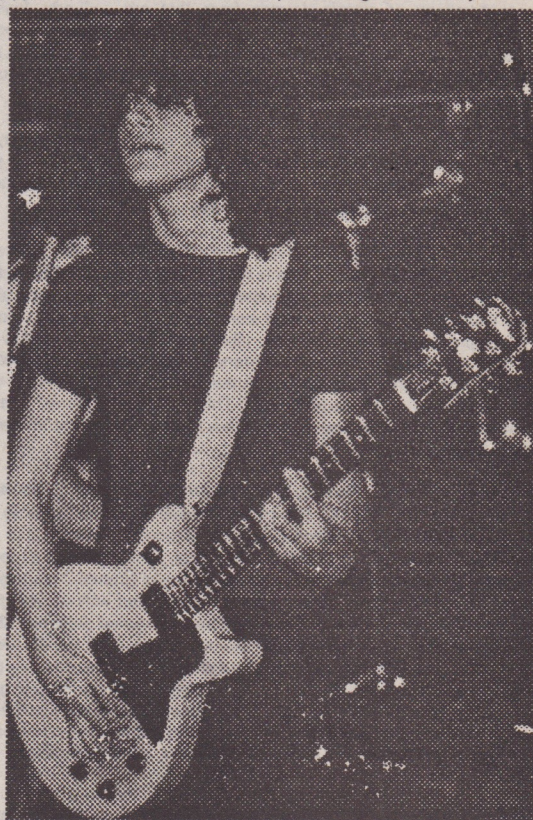
GATHERING - *Nighttime Birds* (Century Media) I'm on a winning streak as of late, most everything I've bought has been good. Where the Gathering are lacking in speed, they make up for it with a powerful vocalist. One distinct feature I've noticed is how the music seems to be customized around the vocalist, and she belts out those lyrics. Good stuff for those of you who like slower, gothic styled metal. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

GEEZER - *Black Science* (TVT) From the first song on, original vocalist Burton Bell (Fear Factory) is missed. Now, don't read more into this than I've written, *Black Science* is still one heck of a good album. It just goes to show that age is not detrimental to crunch. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

GERTY - *Carload of Scenic Effects* (Merkin Records, 310 East Biddle Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202) Based in Baltimore, firmly entrenched in pop-rock territory, excelling at dead-simple melodies, short'n'sweet arrangements, perky guy-gal vocal harmonies, clear, keen, to the point songwriting, an acute sensibility that specializes in heart-rending melancholy which ironically counters the band's cheery, radiant sound, and an impossible to resist effervescent pluckiness which enhances the sonic immediacy of every last track, this assured, commanding, utterly engaging trio make the grade with flying colors with their bright, breezy, buoyantly bopping debut album. - Joe Wawrzyniak

GIRLPOPE - *Cheeses of Nazareth* (Atom Smash/Scrape Sound, PO Box 770, Buffalo NY 14213) You have to love that title and happily, the music is just as much fun. Girlpope (it's three guys) play pop-punk with driving guitars, innocent lyrics, and really catchy songs. They remind me a bit of Johnny Puke's Cletus mingled with some jangly early REM. Throw in a few bouncy ska parts and you've got a totally yummy combination. But how do they stay so happy in a frigid hellhole like Buffalo? - Jim T.

GLADYS - *Lucky* (Coolidge Records, 157 Coolidge Terrace Wyckoff, NJ 07481) This incredibly ragged, rough-edged Lexington, Kentucky foursome spit up 13 appealingly sparse, dead simple, none-too-fancy-or-ostentatious country-rock songs which boast hardly any sleek high-gloss sheen to speak of, but possess an abundance of heart and sincerity which makes this album an authentically gritty, unpolished nugget. The band's fairly primitive, ferociously no-frills garage rock-style approach eschews any excessive show-offy pyrotechnics in favor of a more spare, straightforward style which



Flick

greatly enhances the intimacy and immediacy of each and every cut. Still, the arrangements don't stint on the instruments: a harmonica, slide guitar (yes!), banjo (double yes!), violin, and even a two quart sauce pan (!) are all put to exquisite, understated use. And lead singer Chad Hurley's nasal, quavering, raw-throated voice puts Neil Young's tremulous, toothpick-lean whine to shame. Okay, so it ain't too slick, but as far as beautifully cut-to-the-bone high lonesome country-rock numbers go it's tops of its type. - Joe Wawrzyniak

GODFLESH - *Songs of love and Hate In Dub* (Earache) "I've got a great idea, let's make our angst ridden electronic pain more market- friendly by making it danceable!". - Gary McGarvey Jr.

GO GO RAYS -Family Fun Night (Ska Satellite/Moon) The band's own motto sums up their album and my review. "Too punk for the ska kids, too ska for the punk kids". - Gary McGarvey Jr.

GOLDEN LAKE DINER -Letters Home (Sonic Unyon, PO Box 57347 Jackson Station ON, Canada LOP 4X2) A potentially interesting concept album that's bungled by lackluster execution. While the concept itself is arrestingly warped (a morally confused young boy named Albert who belongs to a severely dysfunctional family kills his own mother in order to please a fantasy woman who lives in a flashlight!), the musical application of this concept leaves a great deal to be desired: the faint, whiny vocals, inert beats, protracted, redundant melodies, off-key harmonies, muted arrangements, vague lyrics, murky production, painfully slow, trudging tempos, and a fatal lack of sorely needed vitality make this hideously dull, overlong album an arduous chore to endure. Which is a genuine shame, because if the Canadian progressive noise-pop quartet responsible for this snoozer had only mustered some energy and been more polished, this album could have been pretty memorable instead of instantly forgettable. - Joe Wawryzniak

THE GRAVY - Hangman's Pop (Q Division, 443 Albany St, Boston MA 02118) Todd Spahr's Cavedogs specialized in jangly, retro mid 60's flavored pop. In his new band, The Gravy, Spahr "moves on" to the more complex, psychedelic rock of the late 60's and early 70's, after LSD and Vietnam twisted the power-pop vibe of "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" into something much darker and forbidding. Even the "pop" tunes on this disc have a somber overtone, while others seem to be painstaking reconstructions of certain sounds from that era -- "Lady Jane"-era Stones, *White Album*-era Lennon, etc. After the Cavedogs' major label meltdown, you can understand why Spahr would have some bile to get out of his system, but frankly, I found the moody undertones of this material unpleasant and unsatisfying. - Jim T.

GREEN DAY -Nimrod (Reprise/Warner) It would be easy to say how much Green Day suck because they "Sold Out." All I can/will say is *Nimrod* is pretty darn good, and much better than *Insomniac* (the last album). It's worth getting. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

GRENDEL - School Vehicle (Resin Records, PO Box 5061, Washington, DC, 20016-1201) Wow, this is really interesting stuff! Think classic DC/Fugazi influenced emo, complete with distorted guitar and all, but then replace the bass lines with some funk bass and add a dose of white-rap influence to the vocals. But, just when you think you know what to expect, they throw the listener a curve ball. The fourth cut, "Sharks and Minnows," is a case in point. Cross country twang with a jazz waltz and you'll understand. This is a very unique, energetic release that impresses me greatly. This one is strongly recommended. - Paul Silver

THE GREY SPIKES - Year Zero (Vital Gesture Records, PO Box 46100, Los Angeles, CA, 90046) The press release declares that this is an amazing punk rock masterpiece, with a sound between the Dead Kennedys and the New Bomb Turks. Yeah, and my bank account is somewhere between Bill Gates and the Sultan of Brunei! This is garage metal. Very heavy, simplistic, metallic music, but with a raw, garage edge to it. I guess a few of the songs are somewhat punk-like, though the overall album sounds nothing like any of the punk bands I've ever heard. OK, now that I've gotten that out of the way, is the disc any good? Well, for the most part it's OK, I guess. The vocals are classic garage style. The style works well most of the time. Occasionally there's a little too much metal, and there's some wanky guitar solos going on, too. The last "secret" track is a competent cover of a Stooges classic. - Paul Silver

GROOVIE GHOU LIES - Re-Animation Festival (Lookout Records, P.O. Box 11374, Berkeley CA 94712-2374) The Groovie Ghoulies are back rocking and rolling on another 12 song CD that just totally rocks. Dan Panic (ex Screaching Weasel) drums on this and if that doesn't get you to buy it, just look at the label it's on - it's got to be good. The Ghoulies have a Lookout type sound but distinguished in its own way - you'll want to study the lyrics so you can sing along in the car and have all your friends thinking you're so damn cool. A definite Ramones feel here to keep the kids coming back for more and more. - Conor Moore

H20 - Thicker Than Water (Epitaph) Is there anything this can band can do wrong? These guys just simply amaze me with their melodic hardcore that all the kids love. This one kicks ass just like their self-titled CD, only a little more hardcore and fast to me (which does not bother me one bit.) Great bunch of guys who know how to get you so energized you will feel like you could beat up Big John Stud (WWF, if ya don't know who this is!). Go pick this one up before all your friends so

they will think you are the coolest. - Conor Moore

HALF EMPTY - People Are Basically Good (New Disorder Records, 445 b14th st. S.F. CA 94103) Pissed off four-to-the floor punk with guy/girl vocals. If your feeling extra punk today you might wanna go pick this up. - Rick K.

HANNA CRANNA (Big Deal Records, P.O. Box 2072 Peter Stuyvesant Station New York, NY 10009-9998) This winsome New Haven, Connecticut foursome serve up a pleasingly relaxed, unpretentious little winner with their second album, a solid venture into smoothly polished country-pop with an appropriately regretful blues music tinge to it. This eclectic mix of disparate musical genres works very well, thanks to the dryly mellifluous vocals, taut, sparse, uncluttered arrangements, the intriguing air of melancholic soul searching which permeates the lyrics and softly flows throughout the band's slow, mellow, soothing groove, and Joey Molland's clear, spot-on production. In equal parts doleful and soulful, with enough bitter-sweet emotion to haunt your memory for quite some time, this album really hits the sorrowful spot with heart-breaking grace and restraint. - Joe Wawryzniak

BEN HARPER -Will To Live (Virgin) I'll give you one reason why I don't like him. His material is so good, it makes me feel like the apathetic slob that I am. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

THE HARRY PATT BAND (Burnt Sienna Records, 207 Powhatan Ave, Columbus, OH 43204) 2 guys - Jason on guitar and Patt on the traps - make up the Harry Patt Band. Weird stuff here, hillbilly tinged noisy garage rock. Goofy lyrics about moustache rides and cherry patches. If Ween had grown up in Appalachia and not New Hope? - Rick K.

HEAD - The Monkeys (Evil Clown) The debut full-length by this Seattle band, they had a tall order to fill to match their well received Street Level Assault EP from three years ago. Unfortunately, while this is a solid record, it falls a little short of their earlier standards. The songs aren't quite as catchy, nor do they play with as much energy. Even the humor in the lyrics seems less inspired this time. Oh well, they still do the Ramones sound better than most. - Rick Spithoff

This Cassette Is Free



The Dummyup sampler tape has a couple songs a piece from **BARON AUTOMATIC**, **NOTHING COOL** and **THE DREAD**. All you have to pay is a buck, which covers postage. Pretty good deal, eh? Sure, we've done it before, but hey; we here at Dummyup Inc. are pretty much a one trick pony. C'mon, you know you like the free stuff.

This CD Is Not Free, that is. Baron Automatic's debut CD, *Wayrunner*, costs \$8.00 rpd, and is filled with 14 songs of the catchiest, goofiest pop punk you ever laid ears on. They've been compared to F.Y.P, Green Day and Seven Seconds. You'll like it.



We Still Have Some of the Nothing Cool / !llingtons split LP. It's got six new, unreleased studio songs from each band and a great, full color cover by Chris Shary. It's only \$7.00ppd. You missed out on the white vinyl, but we still have plenty black.

We've got a bunch more stuff, so you should send us a stamp for a sticker, bookmark and catalog of nifty releases from bands like Nothing Cool, The Dread, The !llingtons, Beatnik Termites and more. Make all checks and money orders to J. Bellah. If you live somewhere other than North America, you should send more money. Oh yeah, the tape is completely free when you order something.

Dummyup Inc. PO Box 642634 San Francisco, CA 94164-2634

HEAVY JOHNSON TRIO - *Put Your Weight On It* (Candy-Ass Records, P.O. Box 42382, Portland OR 97242) Big '90s rock from this Portland, Oregon group with hints of L7's punk-metal hybrid and the experimental heaviness of the Melvins. Even though their music is way too predictable most of the time, the Johnsons do generate some firepower on songs like "Negator" and "Sluggo." - Rob Thornton

(HED) pe (Zomba Recording Corporation, 137-139 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001) Hip hop and hardcore are a music genre match made in heaven, as this ferociously funky-ass debut album from a seriously smokin' Orange County, California bunch of funkhouse lunatics gloriously affirms. Aggressive, overwhelming, and simply awesome, this honey comes on like gangbusters with its pulverizing, powerhouse sonic blast of screeching vocals, crunching guitars, burning bass, chunky, throbbing beats, gritty, staring down life's worst demons lyrics, pull out all the earth shattering stops turntable antics (the scratching is incredibly rough, rousing stuff), jackhammer drumming, an in-yo'-face-and-ain't-gonna-budge bad-ass attitude, and a dense, devastating, deadly sound that roars from your stereo speakers with fury of an extremely pissed off lion. Play this magnificently mind-rupturing monster loud -- and often. - Joe Wawrzyniak

HEIDIES - *Exit Ten* (Insurance Scam, PO Box 145, Northville MI 48167) I read in an interview somewhere with Milo from the Descendents that he considered his bands brand of punk to be "chainsaw pop". The same can be said about The Heidies. They have the ability to offset crunchy riffs with some incredibly harmonious vocals, courtesy of John Marshall. The band does have some ways to go musically, as they can become repetitive, but that will come with time. *Exit Ten* has laid a very solid groundwork. The energy is most definitely there, along with the skill to write songs that are just too damn catchy. You will love "Cartoon Suicide", "Fade Away", "Purposeless", "T.W.I.N.K.I.E.", and "Self-Inflicted". While there are moments here that are a little sugary, this is a guilty pleasure. The melody and the hooks will draw you in, particularly from drummer Steve Garcia. Garcia is the steadiest musician of the bunch, and his rhythmic bashing holds each of the tracks together, allowing bassist Aaron Jacobson and guitarist JD Bomr to explore various punk speeds. While Marshall's voice lacks true dynamic range, he compensates by allowing his vocals to play off the other members. In the end, The Heidies are one of those promising young bands that you hope to stay together because they will be fun to watch in the not too distant future. - Rich Quinlan

HO-HUM - *Sanduleak* (HTS Recordings, 7410 L.St., Little Rock Arkansas 72207) Ho-Hum plays pop-influenced rock, free from pretension and labels. The only problem here is that the stuff is terribly boring. The band's name can perfectly sum up the listening experience of this record. Yes, there is a timeless rock quality here, to the degree that the band seems to buck all trends and plays steady rock n' roll. However, each track seems generic and terribly predictable. At times, the Arkansas outfit resembles acts like Counting Crows or the Wallflowers - bands making readymade radio fluff, just waiting to be forced upon the masses. Each song here is free from any controversy or excitement. The one highlight is the industry bashing "Fake Pop Minefield". Unfortunately, moments like this are few and far between. - Rich Quinlan

HOME MADE - *As We Fall* (Theologian, PO Box 1070, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254) Great punk rock with a sort of happy sound. All nine songs are very tight and well played. I liked every song on the disc. Kind of reminded me of All. - Denis Sheehan

THE HONEYRODS (Capricorn Records, 416 East Paces Ferry Road, Atlanta, GA 30305) Hailing from the country music capitol of Nashville, Tennessee, this ebullient straight-down-the-line rock quintet proves that there's plenty of catchy, engaging, pleasingly unpretentious good time rock'n'roll music to be found way down south. Blending sturdy, smoldering, hook-laden arrangements (the blistering two guitar onslaught is especially effective), tightly pitched vocals, a highly emotive, somewhat rough-around-the-edges pedal-to-the-metal sound, a loopy sense of humor (the wryly dead-on "Soap Opera" cleans up here), some nifty studio craftsmanship (dig the heavily echoed vocal in "By Myself"), and a hugely likable, modest, down-to-earth upbeat attitude into one very enjoyable and endearing debut album, these guys serve up a disc which may not be too profound and certainly won't give the listener much to ponder about, but does wholly succeed in being quite entertaining and uplifting. In short, this album's a perfect choice for whenever you're in the mood for a nice little musical pick-me-up. - Joe Wawrzyniak

HURL - *Not a Memory* (My Pal God Records, PO Box 13335, Chicago IL 60613) Hurl plays indie rock for the late nineties. This Pittsburgh four piece uses their obvious musical ability to mix disjointed song structures with jazz-rock guitar throughout their second release. While they certainly will capture and hold your attention on tracks like "She Laughed/She Died"

and "All Lines Have Been Erased", I found myself wading through efforts that seemed to linger on without any real direction. The band is noisy and highly skilled, but they lack some of the raw musical excitement that a band like Don Caballero (some members' former home) can produce. I listened to *Not a Memory* admiring the playing, but feeling terribly bored. - Rich Quinlan

HYPOCRISY - *Osculum Obscenum* (Nuclear Blast) What we have here is a collection of older material under the guise of a new album (thanks to the guy that told me). The material included here is the state of death metal about five years ago. I'm happy to say that I liked this, but I love their newer stuff a bunch more. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

I FARM - *So My Kids Won't Have To* (Crap Records, PO Box 305, Eastchester NY 10709) The hardest of hardcore punk. Insane, loud, fast, and snotty all rolled up in a ball. The drummer is the highlight of this band. The vocals can be compared to Chris Doherty of Gang Green. "No Thanks To You" is the slowest song on the disc, it is also the best. The hidden track on this disc should have remained that way - hidden. The annoying screeching made it impossible to listen to. Other than that, this disc is a good one. - Denis Sheehan



Incubus

IDA - *Ten Small Paces* (Simple Machines, P.O. Box 10290, Arlington VA 22210) Hello!??? Is this thing on???!! Turn up the amps, Ida, shout at each other, throw things, destroy your axes in a pique of Townsend-inspired rage and frustration, but please, don't subject us to another snooze-fest like *Ten Small Paces*. Quiet, introspective egghead folk/rock and boisterous country honk with little balls and no muscle. Even Ida's cover of "Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere" substitutes pretension and harmony for Neil Young's lyrical confusion. Sadly, it's the disc's lone high point. Ida may be taking *Ten Small Paces* but they're getting nowhere fast. - Reverend K

IDLE - *Ego Park* (Big Deal, P.O.Box 2072, New York NY 10009) This was probably my favorite CD sent to me this month. Idle are anything but idle, jumping from pop to indie punk and touching all of the bases in between. Some of my favorites were *Vodka Swing* (groovin pop), *G Train* (should have

been on the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack, *Twisted* (garage rock with a very twisted guitar sound) and *For Better* (Afghan Whigs straight outta tha hood). Yes, you could say this CD kind of grew on me like a fungus. But the good kind, the kind that you can catch a buzz from. - Chris Duncan

IGGY POP - *King Biscuit Flower Hour Live* (King Biscuit) Recorded live at the Channel in Boston on July 19, 1988, this re-mixed, uncut live recording from the "Instinct" Tour serves up a great show of newer and older Iggy songs delivered with a great lineup: The band consisted of Iggy, guitarist Andy McCoy of Hanoi Rocks, UK Subs bassist Alvin Gibbs, Paul Garristo of the Psychedelic Furs on drums, and Madness' Seamus Beaghen on keyboards. Stooges classic like "No Fun," "I Feel Alright," "I Wanna Be Your Dog," and "Penetration" sound as fresh as then-new songs like "Cold Metal" and "Squarehead." The gem is "Kill City." Iggy rocks, period. Seventeen tracks of a punk pioneer showing the kids how it's done. - Frank Phobia.

IN BETWEEN BLUE (Deprecious Productions, PO Box 700, Maywood, NJ 07607) When a band is pretentious enough to call themselves truly different and claim they are redefining excellence, and still yet have the balls to spew forth clichés like "If you recognize the future when you hear it," well, that leaves an easy target for people like me. Gentlemen, stop being egotistical assholes, the world does indeed NOT revolve around you. What we have here is slow, emotional, overproduced college radio rock. Not terrible, not great, but man, do their attitudes need humbling. I'd even say they're excellent musicians, but then it might go to their heads. - Tom Brebric

INCUMBUS - *S.C.I.E.N.C.E* (Epic). First off, this is an enhanced CD so all you computer people will appreciate that. The music here is funk fused with metal. Borrowing from *The Real Thing* era of Faith No More, there are punchy bass hooks and jabs all over the place. Refreshing and different. - Paul Hanson

INK & DAGGER (Initial Records, PO Box 17131, Louisville KY 40217) This disc is twenty four minutes of relentless intensity. The band somehow stuffs ten songs into this far too short, yet incredibly satisfying release. Ink And Dagger are another young hardcore band taking the scene into new directions while destroying stale stereotypes and combining old ideas with new innovations. There is an element of danger to this release, as evidenced on tracks like "The Road to Hell", "Caretaker", "Frigid Shortcomings" and "Bloodlust". This could be the first hardcore for vampires. Loud, screeching guitars, brutal drumming and tortured vocals all blend together to actually form a sense of disturbing rhythm and harmony. One of the finest examples of this is "Shadowtalker". Other amazing tracks include "The Changeling" (great film if you can find it) and the closer, "Crawler". This is not your ordinary record, and this is definitely not your older brothers' hardcore. - Rich Quinlan

INSPECTOR 7 -... *The Infamous* (Radical Records, 77 Bleecker St. #C2-21, NYC 10012) If not one of the coolest Oi/Ska bands in New Jersey, then definitely one of the best ever. If you don't like Inspector 7 then you own too much hair. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

INSULATED - *Fence* (Frozen Hound Recordings, 5634 Camellia Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91601) Funky, spacey, and rocking music which borders between very cool, tight, and imaginative music and truly dull, slicked out commercialized music. It's a very thin line they walk, with any given song at any moment ready to fall on one side or the other. But they never do. They just walk that line. As such, my feelings about this release are quite mixed. Sometimes I think to myself that I really like it a lot. Other times I find myself repulsed. A very curious and interesting dichotomy that you may wish to explore for yourself. - Paul Silver

THE INTERPRETERS - *Back in the U.S.S.A.* (Volcano Recordings, 71 W. 23rd St. 14th Floor, New York, NY 10010) Bouncy new wave punk in the vein of the Buzzcocks meet the Cars. Fully retro, lots of energy and lots of fun. "Sellers" is a standout track, with a garage feel to it. This one would make a great disc to throw in the CD player for your next party! - Paul Silver

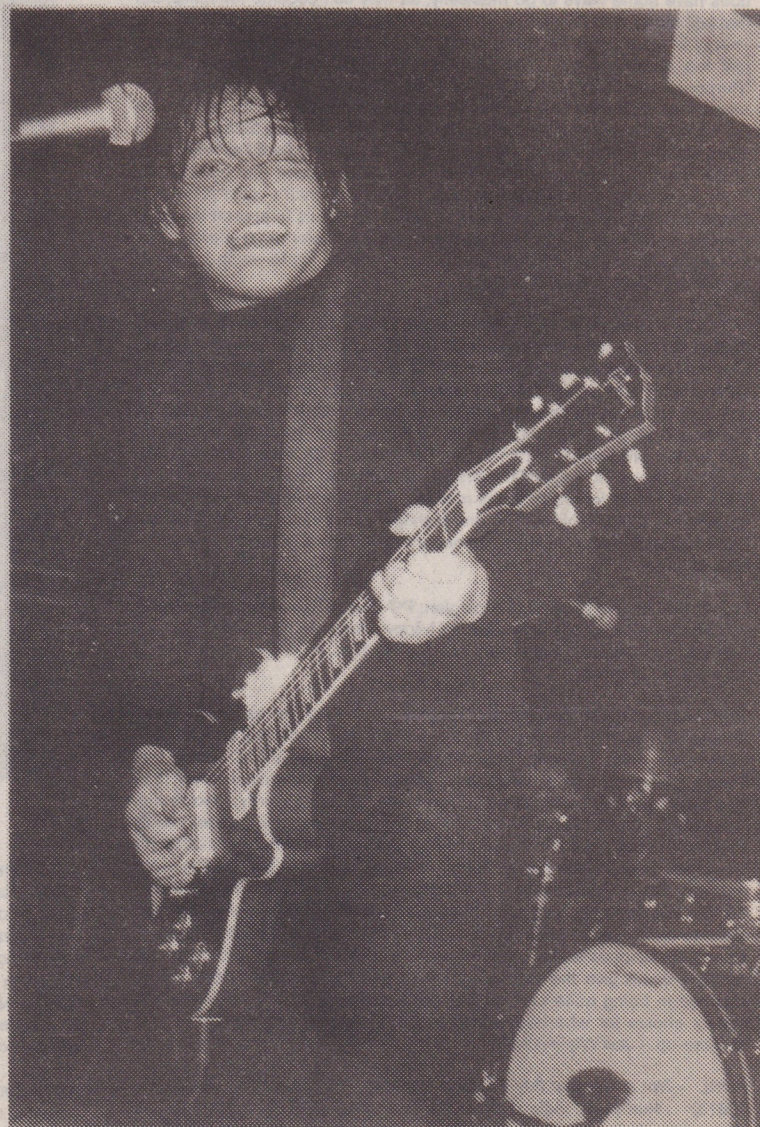
IRONY OF LIGHTFOOT - *IBEX* (Wreck-Age, PO Box 263, New York, NY 10012) Fast and loud post emo-punk. The

music is up-tempo, hard, and kind of emo-like. The vocals are shouted loudly. The whole has loads of energy, power, and originality. - Paul Silver

IT COULD BE NOTHING - ...*Just A Ride* (Opulence! Records, c/o icbn PO Box 2071, Wilmington, NC 28402-2071, email-Kenyata@Juno.com) If Alice in Chains bought a keyboard, threw in some weird effects, and tried to be space-rock band. At times the singer tries to sound like Mike Patton of Faith No More. Really bad prog-metal, no thank you! - Rick K.

JABBER - 6-song CD EP (PO Box 821, Eatontown NJ 07724) Jangly, chiming guitars and tasty keyboards provide the backdrop to the mellifluous vocals of Erika Simonian. The songs tend to be lilting and folksy, soothing and melodic, more adult-contemporary than alternative. The wry and whimsical "Stomp On Me" introduces a bit of a bossa nova beat into the mix, while Abby Mann's piano in the elegiac "Stoic Man" recalls Derek & The Dominos' classic "Layla." With their warm harmonies, reflective lyrics, and sophisticated jazz/pop sound, Jabber blends in perfectly with the current crop of mature folk-rock acts around Hoboken like the Marys, Tiny Lights, and Mary Ann Farley. In a market overrun with 50 different flavors of soda pop, it's refreshing to sip a dry martini now and again. - Jim Testa

JACK ACID - *While You Laugh at Our Appearance, We Will Rob You Silly and Survive in the Cracks of Your Poop-hed World* (New Disorder Records, 445 14th Street San Francisco, CA 94103) A truly imposing 26-track



Interpreters

monster CD ripe to bursting with punchy, potent punk which possesses an angry, outspoken, remarkably incisive protest-rock edge to it. The rapid-fire shouted vocals, fairly complex fast'n'furious arrangements, and righteously pissed-off lyrics come through loud and clear on one explosive cut after another. The extremely topical subject matter is another significant asset: the shallowness of leading a purely materialistic existence, lack of unity in our mixed-up polyglut culture, loneliness, the absurdity of strictly enforcing petty crime laws, the generation gap, mindless, unquestioning patriotism, and much, much more are forcefully addressed with a powerhouse blend of out-and-out boiling rage and bracing, up-front honesty. In short, this is punk rock at its rebellious, nonconformist, status quo bashing (and disrupting) best: fiercely down-to-earth, provocative, and uncompromising, with a very acute and adamant social conscience. What's not to like? - Joe Wawryzniak

JACK ACID - *While You Laugh at Our Appearance, We Will Rob You Silly and Survive in the Cracks of Your Poop-hed World* (New Disorder Records, 445 14th Street San Francisco, CA 94103) A truly imposing 26-track monster CD ripe to bursting with punchy, potent punk which possesses an angry, outspoken, remarkably incisive protest-rock edge. The rapid-fire shouted vocals, fast'n'furious arrangements, and righteously pissed-off lyrics come through loud and clear on one explosive cut after another. The extremely topical subject matter is another significant asset: the shallowness of leading a purely materialistic existence, lack of unity in our mixed-up polyglut culture, loneliness, the absurdity of strictly enforcing petty crime laws, the generation gap, mindless, unquestioning patriotism, and much, much more are forcefully addressed with a powerhouse blend of out-and-out boiling rage and bracing, up-front honesty. In short, this is punk rock at its rebellious, nonconformist, status quo-bashing (and disrupting) best: fiercely down-to-earth, provocative, and uncompromising, with a very acute and adamant social conscience. What's not to like? - Joe Wawryzniak

JACK DRAG - *Unisex Headwave* (Hep-Cat Records) Somewhat of an experimental, lo-fi indie sound mixed in with brit-pop Radiohead influence. The title track takes so many turns and delivers countless hooks, you can't decide if you love it or hate it. Such is the case with the rest of Jack Drag's second full length. On "Cha Cha," the band starts off with an urban-jungle-like drama and then ventures into a 43 second Beastie Boys hip hop groove, shouting, "Who the fuck is this freak anyway?" All this recorded on the singer's living-room four-track. What's great about Jack Drag is their style changes from song to song. With one track, I'm reminded of indie Sonic Youth, another Radiohead, while further tracks are more hip-hop meets Flaming Lips influenced, so totally bizarre that I began to fall in love with it. Singing through an array of effect pedals, John Dragonetti's lyrics might not make too much sense but the melodic, at times noisy harmonies were soothing to my ears. From ballads like "Screw, Surfin' Le Charles" (a romance song about the Charles River) and "Tattoo" (a radio-friendly pop song) to noisy, fuzzed out melodies, *Unisex Headwave* made the perfect summer accessory. - Dave Brown

JACK OFF JILL - *Sexless demons and Scars* (Risk Records, 7080 Hollywood Blvd, Los Angeles, Ca 90028) If Jesse Helms ever heard this female group he would have a heart attack and die. If you like Babes In Toyland, you will like Jack Off Jill - they are musically identical. With songs titled "Cumdumpster" and "Working with Meat", it shouldn't be too hard to figure out which way the lyrics run. There is also a real naughty hidden track. I'll take Babes In Toyland. What is Senator Helms' address? - Denis Sheehan

JERSEY - *No Turning Back* (Raw Energy) It's hard keeping up with all the new bands coming out these days even when they live only 3 blocks away. That's the case with this Toronto area band. I hadn't even heard of them until I caught a review in MRR comparing them favorably to Operation Ivy. Recent Schleprock and Rancid are probably more accurate musical comparisons, while the vocals are a bit similar to Rhythm Collision. Jersey mixes melodic punk and hardcore with some ska, and somehow manage to sound distinctive from the aforementioned bands. A young band that's verging on greatness, they've already established themselves as one of Canada's better punk bands with this debut release. - Rick Spithoff

JOAN OF ARC - *A Portable Model of* (Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810) Another in the family tree of Chicago-area emo-pop bands. On this disc, the music is well written and well performed, with some songs having sparse instrumentals, and all having nice melodies and harmonies. The electronic effects seem out of place, though, and detract from the music. The vocals are sung in a typically angst-ridden style, while the lyrics are kind of strange and seemingly meaningless. A few of the pieces are strange, out of place noise pieces such as "Romulans!Romulans!" which is made up of short wave radio samples. - Paul Silver

JOHN THE BAKER with **SLIMY PENIS BREATH LIVE** (Living Alternatives, POB 251, Woodstock, NY 12498) Woodstock isn't just leftover hippie trash, its also anarcho-punks. Pissed off punks put this anti-authority CD out to raise some \$ for two victims of police violence. More of a diatribe/rant than just pissed off songs. I actually liked this and am keeping it...but the song "Bang/Bang/Bang" that's "dedicated" to hunters was a definite cheap shot against gun owners. Real men own guns, so a hearty fuck you to this type of stupidity. - Tom Brebric (Editors note: As always, the opinions of our reviewers do not necessarily reflect the views of management.)

JOHNNY FRANKENSTEIN - *Can't Stand No Pain* (Ocawah Records, 510 Covewood Blvd, Webster, NY 14580) Ten live tracks make up this disc. There is a different sound to this band. Slower punk, kind of like The Dead Boys. The entire disc was interesting and I liked it. If The Doors played punk rock, this would be the way it sounded. - Denis Sheehan

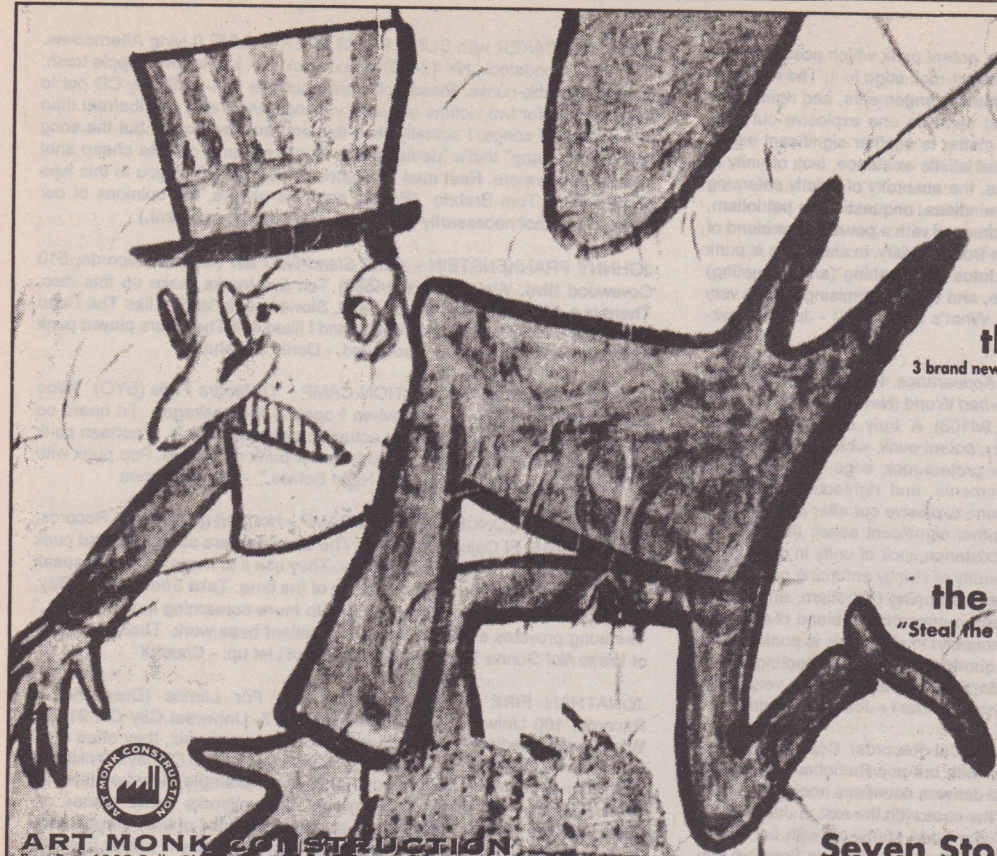
JON COUGAR CONCENTRATION CAMP - *'Til Niagra Falls* (BYO) "Woo hoo" was what I first thought when I opened the package. I'd heard so much about these guys yet never actually heard their music. Fourteen punk rock songs with a captivating attitude and a punk rock edge. Pop punk with a Queens-like guitar lead on "The Night Before." - Eva Silverman

JON COUGAR CONCENTRATION CAMP - *Hot Shit* (Mullethead Records, PO Box 20515, El Cajon CA 92021) The band delivers straight-ahead punk on their 10-song, 10-inch vinyl release. They use it to move lyrics that speak the words you save for real jerks, much of the time. Take *Shut Up And Play*, "OK asshole. I'm not talking anymore. No more screaming in your face...." The song provides a forum for some excellent bass work. There's a cover of *We're Not Gonna Take It*. The rock doesn't let up. - ChuckX

JONATHAN FIRE EATER - *Wolf Songs For Lambs* (DreamWorks Records, 100 Universal Plaza, Bungalow 477, Universal City CA 91608) When major media conglomerates get into the music biz, they often don't have a clue as to what the hell they're doing. Just look to Disney's lackluster performance with their Hollywood imprint as an example. So when this first musical effort from media "supergroup" DreamWorks came across my desk, I had my doubts. Although not entirely convinced of their competence when it comes to rock & roll, at least their first shot doesn't fall far from the target. From New York by way of Washington, D.C. Jonathan Fire Eater bring a unique sound and a certain amount of street cred via numerous indie releases to their major label bow. Sort of a sixties garage band meets nineties noisemongers groove, *Wolf Songs For Lambs* offers enough screaming guitars and ringing Farfisa to satisfy revisionists while sounding contemporary enough to reach the kids. Songs like "There Is No Love Like That" or "These Little Monkeys" may not be ready for primetime, but neither are they mere corporate alternative fodder. An encouraging big league debut for both Jonathan Fire Eater and DreamWorks. - Reverend K

JOUGH DAWN BAKER / VADE - *Split LP* (Henry's Finest Recordings, 16128 NE 145th Street, Woodinville, WA 98072) Both of these young bands play unruly heavy music. There are elements of bands like Rorschack and the Melvins here, particularly with JDB as they bash out thick slabs of punishment. Their three efforts here all contain moments of quiet that are mercilessly shattered by ripping guitar and violent vocals. On top of this, the lyrics are both interesting and sarcastic. Check out "Boise Cascade," my personal favorite. Vade, while made up of high school students still too young to drive, show more musical prowess than the aforementioned JDB. Vade also features momentary lapses of calm broken by harsh eruptions of noise, but these five inexperienced kids play like seasoned pros, showing real command of time change, leading to a raw emotional feel on tracks like "Bridgette Bardot" and "Winter Recovery System." Both of these Pacific Northwest bands have buried the legacy of grunge and moved on to newforms of noise. - Rich Quinlan

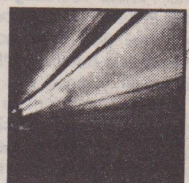
THE JOYKILLER - *Three* (Epitaph Records) California has a reputation for being a real sweet, sunny kind of state. Well, this Long Branch pop-punk group prove that not everything from California is sweet and sunny. Examining the darker side of love -- jealousy, vehement self-loathing, strong feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy, infidelity, fear of a relationship falling apart, rape, and so on -- with stunning clarity and honesty, the 15 songs found herein prove to be as disturbing as they are provocative. The pretty, harmonic, gorgeously well-orchestrated arrangements and handsome production make the songs more unsettling instead of less so, providing a deeply ironic contrast to the brutally grim lyrics. Upsetting and harrowing in comparable measure, *Three* makes for often uncomfortable listening, but the sumptuous quality of the music and the album's profound sense of tell-it-like-it-is integrity make it a perversely enthralling, praiseworthy effort nonetheless. - Joe Wawryzniak



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still more record reviews...

KEVIN K. BAND (Suite 108, 9061 U.S. 19N, Pinellas Pk FL 33782) I liked this way more than some of his previous releases. Kevin is letting go of some of his Johnny Thunders-wannabe stylizations and is finding more of his own style on this release. All good subject matter is covered: being treated like dirt, drugs, G.G. Allin, DWI. This CD was dedicated to the memory of Alan K. whose demo is on tracks 13 thru 18. It's a shame Alan isn't around anymore as his tracks "Breakdown" and "Nine Lives" explore the shitty side of life honestly. - Tom Brebric

THE KABALAS - *The Eye of Zohar* (Dionysus) Dionysus produces some strange stuff, some of it innovative and some, like this, just doesn't hit the mark for me. This is polkadelic klezmer - a combo of Jewish folk and lounge music. I think the Kabala deals with mysticism and I'm mystified as to who the target audience for this accordion bachelor pad sound is. Oh, the CD glows in the dark and came with a plastic eyeball. - Tom Brebric

KEMURI - *Little Playmate* (Roadrunner) Japanese ska-punk imported by Less Than Jake and released by Roadrunner. Good and energetic, definitely makes dancing easier. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

KID WITH MAN HEAD - *Flapjack Hairpiece* (Onefoot Records, PO Box 3834, Cherry Hill NJ 08034-0592) New Jersey's favorite band of goofball punksters return with a new fourteen song effort full of tight, harmony-fueled sing-alongs. The majority of the time, KWMH sounds like a combination of a youthful Green Day mixed with a little Weezer. It is an easily digestible combination, but remember, ear candy is good for you every so often. "You and Me", "Wuss", "Flake", "Mr.Suck" and their priceless reanimation of "Hotel California" are great songs, pure and simple. KWMH play punk rock, with an emphasis on the rock, pumping their songs with bursts of fun-loving energy. Unfortunately, there are some moments here where the guys sound downright foolish. Tracks like "Tidal Wave" and "Cheese Grate Your Face" are mistakes, examples of a band trying too hard to be cute and amusing. However, putting those stumbles aside, KWMH have a solid release with *Flapjack Hairpiece*. This is nothing revolutionary, but for those who believe that punk rock can make you laugh, this may be the one for you. - Rich Quinlan

KING SOUR - *Instrumentally Retarded* (Morphius Records PO Box 13474 Baltimore Maryland 21203-3474) I am usually skeptical about instrumental albums, fearing that the lack of a vocal will cause me to lose interest. Not so here. King Sour are skilled at creating seamless tempo changes while mixing and matching various musical styles within one song. They also have the ability to flat-out rock. These songs are loud, driving chunks of rock with a strong touch of punk aggression thrown in for good measure. Along with this, the band has a goofy sense of humor as evidenced with song titles like "A.D.D." and "Math Rock, My Ass". Tom Peloso, Matt Boyle and Austin Fitch grant you a glimpse of their chaos live with "Sammy Davis Jangles" recorded live at the legendary Firenze Tavern in Philly. This was pure fun from start to finish. - Rich Quinlan

KITTENS - *In Bazooka and the Hustler* (Sonic Unyon Records, PO Box 57347, Jackson Station, Hamilton, Ontario, L8P 4X2, Canada) Fast and heavy punk-grunge. There's a precision here along the lines of NOMEANSNO. This band is super-tight, energetic, and pretty damn cool. Song titles are pretty amusing, too, such as "The Coyote of Northern Italy," "Snow Beluga," and "Death of a Baby Anteater." The songs themselves are hard driving and intense. Cool disc! - Paul Silver

LA SECTA - *Fuzz Godz* (Munster Records, APDO. 147 Santurzi 48980 Bizkaia, Basque Country, SPAIN) Spanish Punk straight from Spain. It's fair, reminds me of old Punk bands; they've got the speed and the attitude. A few songs are in Spanish, and the ones that aren't are pretty funny because of their accent. -Phil Pinto

LAG WAGON - *Double Plaidin* (Fat Wreck Chords) This is the Wagon's forth outing and their most consistent. From start to finish, this rocks, with: big guitars, pounding rhythm section, and of course Joey's earnest croon and heartfelt lyrics. Ken from the Posies plays guitar on this record, weird. Anyway, if you dig these guys, I'm sure you already have this; if you don't, what are you waiting for? Oh yeah, there's also a hilarious picture of the band's faces superimposed over a Bay City Rollers photo! - Rick K.

LATCH KEY KIDS - *Anytime, Anyplace* (1492 Records, 11523 Overbrook Ln, Houston, TX 77077) Run of the mill punk. I couldn't make out any of the lyrics to save my life. I gave this disc a lot of time, but still found it boring.

These guys play very tight music and the vocals try to come across with the snotty sound. It just didn't work. - Denis Sheehan

THE LAZY COWGIRLS - *A Little Sex and Death* (Crypt Records, 1250 Long Branch Avenue # 101 Los Angeles, CA) Raw, punky, right on the fuckin' money trashrock music, done real straight and to the point, with no needless padding and a very winning, refreshing dearth of pretense. The raspy vocals, compact arrangements, neat 'n tasty lyrics (there's lotsa tasty stuff here on two-timin', heart-breakin', hot-to-trot bad girls and the many men they leave battered and broken in their lethal wake), a gritty, throbbing beat, and the catchy, dead-easy, sinewy lowdown grooves make this the perfect platter to play at a smoky, sleazy, disreputable biker bar on a rowdy Saturday night. Nothing subtle or profound; just good, junky, all killer. with no filler. Stupid fun noise that may not ever cook, but does simmer quite nicely. - Joe Wawryzniak

LEFT NUT - *Uncut* (8 Kerswell Way, Warnbro 6169 Western Australia) Hailing from Australia, Left Nut attempts to combine the more brute aspects of punk rock with Aussie pub rock fury, but somehow ends up creating a crude and unfortunately listless record. Tracks like "Garbage" and "She Comes" will insult your intelligence while failing to stir you. This record was initially recorded as a demo then released in its rawest form in an attempt to capture the bands live sound. After listening to this, I came away with the feeling that Left Nut may be fun live, surrounded by tons of other sweaty people after consuming a few pints. However, on record the band sounds hollow and unsure if they really want to blow the roof off a place, or search for a more pop edge. This lack of direction will ultimately leave you frustrated. - Rich Quinlan

PHOEBE LEGERE - *Last Tango in Bubbleland* (Random Records, <http://www.internete.com/sdp/phoebe.html>) A full-time singer, sometime actress (she's appeared in several Troma movies and the classic shock doc *Mondo New York*), and all-around Big Apple fringe eccentric, kooky platinum blonde bombshell Legere delivers a deliciously dippy treat with this irresistibly inane, idiotic, out to lunch high camp hoot and a half. Panting ridiculous lyrics in a slight, breathy, trampy'n'vampy soprano, with a soulful chorus, slow, sinuous, hypnotic hip-hop rhythms, and full-bore orchestration -- everything from an accordion to violins to even a trombone and, yes, a ukelele are tossed into the mix! -- backing her up, Legere belts out such choice cornball cuts as "Armageddon A Go Go," "Love Bubble," and a totally nutzoid cover of Cole Porter's "Boa Constrictor Tango" (sung completely in French, no less!) with a deadpan aplomb that'll have you laughing so hard you just might rupture a lung halfway through the disc. Cute, crazed, and kitschy beyond belief, this one's a must for hard-core aficionados of so-awful-it's-awesome bad music outings. - Joe Wawryzniak

LIFE OF AGONY - *Soul Searching Sun* (Roadrunner) Why are these guys still signed? It's evident they can't write anything substantial! This new album is a mixture of pop and hard rock with tripped out Hippie melodies and shit. Doesn't even compare with the old stuff. - Phil Pinto

LIFTER PULLER - *Half Dead and Dynamite* (No Alternative Records, 2217 Nicollet Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55404) Kind of intense indie pop-rock. The production is very clean and dry, which is very nice. I think the one thing that bothers me just a bit about Lifter Puller, though, is that the vocalist vaguely reminds me of a hybrid of some famous rock band vocalists. He has some Mick Jagger swagger in his voice, but with a Randy Newman-esque quality. But the songs themselves are pretty cool, even if the lyrics are pure potty mouth. I don't think there's a song on here that doesn't use the word "fuck" in it at least once. That doesn't bother me so much, but I sure hope that Lifter Puller doesn't expect much airplay on radio. - Paul Silver

LINCOLN (Slash/London Records USA) The thing that makes this record original is also the thing that gets irritating after about four songs: the lead singer's voice. Gordon Gano meets They Might Be Giants here. This guy is so sweet and sensitive I'm getting a toothache. In the middle of a set on the radio, this would be a welcome change. The lyrics are clever, the instrumentation is well thought out. Some tunes draw heavily on mid 70s R&B and soul sensibilities, which sound fresh with a different vocal style on top. Then I start to think, "Is this guy for real?" I'm sick of irony. There just isn't that much left in the world. Lincoln tries too hard to be perfect. It reeks of corporate PR. Even if the band may had legions of glassy-eyed devoted fans I'd still say, "So what?" Buy this one for your little sister, especially if she's into Hello Kitty and Tamagotchi's. - Alex Saville

LIQUID GANG - "Fantastic Pirate Satellite" 5 song CD EP (Gotham Records, 1841 Broadway, Ste. 1012, NYC 10023) Lithe frontman Chris Holt does the Hi-NRG white-guy rap vocal thing as well as anybody around these days, and if you're looking for a band that works up a sweat, these guys fit the bill. What's new here is a sense of melody that recalls vintage Soundgarden - heavy but not metal, with a groove but not funk. It's the swaying melodic parts in between the frantic hip hop parts that set this Philly quartet apart from the posse of Rage wannabes currently stalking clubland. The grunge-rock cover of Rush's "Working Man" that closes this EP almost makes me forget how much I despise Rush. - Jim T.

LIVING SACRIFICE-Reborn (Tooth & Nail) Man, these guys are pissed off Christians! Hailing from Little Rock, Arkansas, they tear down the walls with their audio brutality. The guitarist has an amazing crunch, and me drummer pounds unmercifully. The whole album is just an immense journey. Definitely check it out. -Phil Pinto

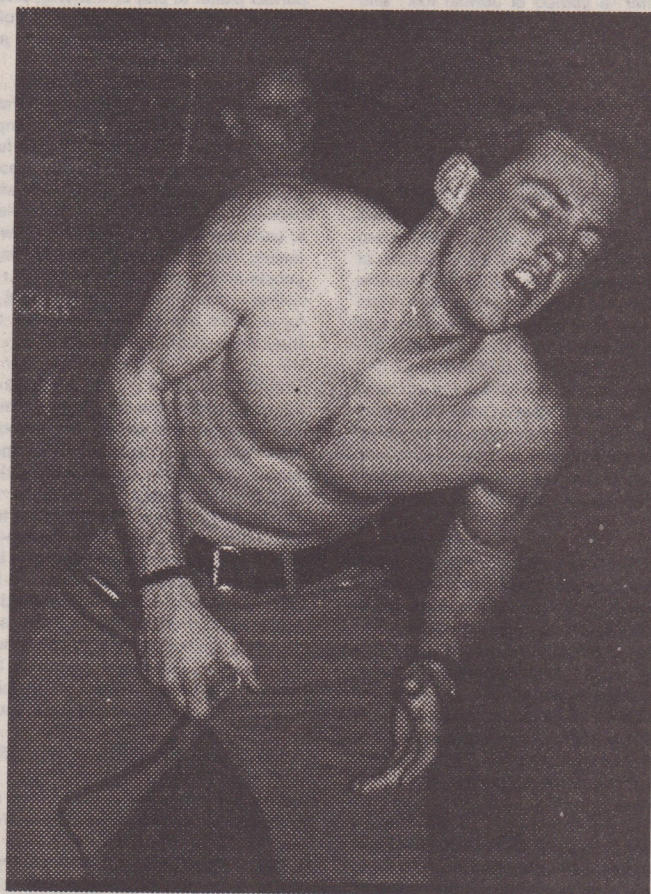
LORDS OF ACID -Our Little Secret (Antler/Subway Records, 7 W 22nd St. 4th Floor NY, NY. 10010) The band voted most likely to need a cold shower are back with album number 3. Although mellower with age, the music still maintains the psychosis, while Praga Khan(singer) maintains her libido. Good stuff if you like pornographic dance music. -Gary McGarvey Jr.

LOS HOOLIGANS -Traditions (Moon) Let me tell you why I really liked this band. 1. They play California ska, which is influenced by Latin & surf music. 2. They sound so much like Lets Go Bowling (also from CA). One of the best things Moon has put out this year. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

LOUNGE - (GFY Records, P.O. Box 598, Clifton NJ 07012) Well this is one damn good pop-punk-with-a-slight-touch-of-ska band. These kids know how to rock and you'll be up and dancing in no time. Reminds me of PENNYWISE meets SCREECHING WEASEL. Only eight songs but this one is still a nice little pick up for all the pop punk fans. Let's face it, every band from NJ is good, period. - Conor Moore

LOVE KIT - 10 Milligram Day (Ginger Records, P.O. Box 06505 Chicago, IL 60606-0505) Sweet, sugary, stirring retro 60's pop-rock, done with commendable skill and panache by a highly charming Chicago foursome. The band's ringing, neatly rockin' sound, the clear, nifty vocal harmonies, the smooth, catchy, hook-ridden arrangements, the extremely well-polished production (the use of echo and distortion are especially effective), and a refreshingly upbeat, cheerful attitude make this debut CD a most rewarding bit of tasty, tuneful ear candy. - Joe Wawryzniak

LUMOUS - b. authorization (Gurea Records 450 Middletown-Lincroft Rd. Lincroft, NJ 07738) Heavy guitars, riffing, acid-drenched vocals. Alice In Chains, Monster Magnet and Ministry all quickly come to mind. This band has a definite sound, but after a couple of times through the CD I think they're still looking for the right song. Wearing their classic rock and progressive influences proudly and without a trace of irony these guys aren't afraid to rock. I like this band better recorded than live. The musicians here are all strong players and the sound translates well in the studio. If you're looking for music to enhance your psychedelic life, kneel down and put out your tongue for Lumous. - Alex Saville



Liquid Gang

THE LUNE - Sill (Aesthetics PO Box 0021 Durham, NH 03824-0021) I almost do not know where to begin when it comes to describing this Boston-based trio. The seven songs on *Sill* literally have something for everyone, regardless of your taste. Jeff Goddard, Brad White and Mark Romano display staggering musical skill as they bounce from genre to genre within the course of one fabulous collection of songs. After opening with the noisy gem "That", the band delivers "The Blues Instrumental", then segues effortlessly into the jazzy "Seatbelt". My personal favorite is the acoustic guitar/harmonica dominated "No, No", whose heartfelt lyrics prove that these guys are wonderful songwriters. This was a rare find, and a very pleasant surprise. It's nice to hear bands that have control over their instruments and are willing to challenge themselves musically. I really urge you to pick this one up. - Rich Quinlan

M39 (Size 13 Records, 1201 Bethlehem Pike, Suite 105, North Wales, PA 19454-2102) Very cleanly produced album full of very slick, commercially

oriented rock music. No, not alterna-rock. Plain, old commercial rock music. Nothing new, nothing original, nothing exciting, nothing to make one stand up and take notice. - Paul Silver

MAGNOLIA THUNDERFINGER - A Lot of Motor Under Your Wheels (Fanger-bang Records) Bad-ass rock 'n' roll. There's power-a-plenty in this testosterone fueled CD. Muscular guitars and tough, snotty vocals take no prisoners. Occasional guitar solos kind of hurt the overall effect, as so some weak "ooohh" type harmonies. But at the end of the day, this is pretty primal, roots rock stuff. - Paul Silver

MAINLINER - Mainliner Sonic (Charnel Music, P.O. Box 170277, San Francisco, CA, 94117-0277) Features five indulgent psych-noise tracks from this Japanese trio. At their best, Mainliner can blend fuzz overkill and primitive rock to good effect, thanks to "Motor Psycho" guitarist Kawabata Makoto's frenzied wah-laden chaos. Unfortunately, the band's extensive improvisations become too tired too soon and quickly use up their "three chords no waiting" tunes. - Rob Thornton

MALEVOLENT CREATION -In Cold Blood (Pavement Music) 13 brutal tracks from Floridian Death Metal Gods. The bands grinds right through the album. Amongst the best are

"Nocturnal Overlord", "Leech", and the little track. -Phil Pinto

MARLEE MACLEOD - Vertigo (TGR Records, 2217 Nicollet Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55404) Female singer/songwriters are really popping up out of the woodwork as of late; such banal, forgettable MOR luminaries as Cheryl Crow, Juliana Hatfield, and Alanis Morissette immediately spring to mind, but the gal who ought to be given all the acclaim and attention those generally overrated ladies have elicited is the criminally overlooked Marlee MacLeod. Blessed with a strong, full-bodied, bluesy Southern twang, a winningly sharp, off-center sensibility ("Me and Shelley Winters" displays MacLeod's wondrous way with oddball lyrics best), and an infectious abundance of pure, unbridled joy, the Alabama-born, Minneapolis-based spitfire acquires herself beautifully on one richly rewarding song after another. The handsome production, the solid, perfectly rendered arrangements, a catchy, gently rolling, neatly ringing country-rock sound, and MacLeod's engagingly gutsy, intelligent, resilient, fairly quirky persona (picture, if you can, an extremely contemporary, wilful, and liberated latter-day Patsy Cline) come together to create a truly dear and very

disarming album. Besides, any woman who can tweak the venerable car song formula with a nifty, novel tune about a van will always get my vote. By all means pick this one up in order to hear what you've been missing. - Joe Wawryzniak

MADDER ROSE - *Tragic Magic* (Atlantic Records) Draw the shades, turn the lights down low, and fix yourself a nice dry martini for this languorously enticing, hip-hop laced, coolly simmering blue-eyed funk offering. As the subdued, but persistent beat calmly ebbs and flows, pushed along by generously applied wah-wah guitar, percolating keyboards, mildly cutting guitars, and lightly percussive drums, Mary Lorson's husky, haunting alto expresses heart-breaking melancholy and regret on a series of uniformly top-rate tracks. Bittersweetly reflective without succumbing to all-out self-pity or defeatism, *Tragic Magic* makes a strong impression with a strikingly minimal amount of effort. A wholly satisfying little treasure. - Joe Wawryzniak

MAN WILL SURRENDER (Revolution, 8900 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, Ca 90211) Eleven melodi-core rock tunes that brings you to the doorway of great rock, but fail to carry you over the threshold. These guys are excellent musicians and the songs are written very well. It sounds like the cd was overproduced and influenced way too much by "corporate rock." The songs are loaded with deep guitar hooks and seem to carry on too long. MWS is a cross between Quicksand and The Foo Fighters. The only song that caught my attention was the fast paced "Open Up." I would like to hear MWS's independent releases. - Denis Sheehan

MANDINGO - *Rock Like A Phoenix* (Dirty Records, P.O. Box 6869, Glendale AZ 85312-6869) This is a live CD which I normally don't like but this one is pretty good quality and just makes ya wish you were at that show. Punk has a wrestling match with pop and the ref calls it a draw and that's the feel of Mandingo - a touch of pop with a perfect amount of punk. Mandingo reminds me of the early Queers but definitely with their own style. Only 9 songs but it's still decent. - Conor Moore

MARGINAL MAN - *Identity* (Dischord) Finally! The D.C. underground landmark record is finally on CD. Next to Minor Threat's "Out Of Step," I view this release as the greatest of all of Dischord's catalog, a heartfelt, angry, melodic, thought-provoking, timeless punk rock classic. This cd contains the first version of "Friends" as well as the classics "Identity," "Marginal Man," and "Missing Rungs." Every kid into punk needs this to complete and document the foundation on which all great punk stands today. - Frank Phobia

MATERIAL ISSUE - *Telecommando Americano* (Rykodisc) I met Jim Ellison on my first trip to Chicago, back in 1988, when he was booking a small club called Batteries Not Included. Jim mentioned that he played in a band and seemed very interested in the fact that I did a fanzine; when I got home, I found that he had mailed me a copy of Material Issue's self-released first EP. Like anyone lucky enough to be exposed to the 'ish in those days, I immediately fell in love with the band's mod power pop and quickly became a fan. I really regret that we lost touch over the years. As you probably know, Jim Ellison committed suicide in June, 1996. This posthumous release includes Material Issue's last recordings as well as their 1987 6-song EP. What's very clear, listening to this from start to finish, is how clear Jim's vision was from the very beginning. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, Ellison had an unfailing ear for melody and a classic touch with pop lyrics. He wrote songs that made you smile even when they were filled with heartbreak and bitterness, and in a better world, his music would have been as ubiquitous as the Beatles'. I'll never forget bumping into the band as they were loading out from their visit to SXSW in 1991. The guys couldn't say anything to me, but they had just been signed to Mercury the night before, and they were positively beaming. That's how I'll always remember Jim Ellison, with that big smile plastered across that friendly, corn-fed, quintessentially midwestern puss of his. And when smiles are hard to come by, I know I'll always be able to brighten my day by playing a little Material Issue. - Jim T.

MAXIMUM PENALTY - *Superlife* (Gypsy Records c/o Velvel Records LLC 740 Broadway New York, NY 10003) Most people who are familiar with New York hardcore are aware of the long, yet somewhat underappreciated history of this band. Personally, I was unsure of MP going into this release, for I have heard them sound both fabulous and horrid in the past. It was for exactly that reason why *Superlife* left me speechless. The band delivers fifteen tracks of instantly catchy and extremely melodic hardcore. Poppy? Not by a longshot. MP have grown as a band and as individual musicians, and the result is an album with a new refined sound. "Believe" is the frenzied gem that begins the record, while "Among Friends", "Hate", "Mood Swings" and "Identify" all display a loud yet pure sing along sharpness. The band branches out by writing a simplistic love song in "Could You Love Me", and they add the horns of Urban Blight for a ska feel on "No More Mondays".

Whether you have followed this band for years or are just finding out about the solid New York scene, you need this. - Rich Quinlan

ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES - *Have A Ball Plus Bowling Tips From The Gutter Punks* (Fat Wreck Chords) Fat Mike's (NOFX) bowling team do more than just bowl, they put a punk twist on songs by the mega-groups from the 70's & 80's. This is the only way I could ever appreciate James Taylor and Elton John. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

MEATMEN - *Evil In A League With Satan* (Go-Kart PO Box 20, NYC 10012) Tesco Vee & the boys make Marilyn Manson lyrically look like a born-again Christian any day of the week! Too bad Marilyn Manson's fans have no sense of humor or they'd all be into the Meatmen. This is also a CD Rom. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

MEGADETH - *Cryptic Writings* (Capitol) When I was 14, I was a metalhead in the fullest sense of the word and all I listened to was metal (good thing I've expanded my tastes). Many years later, I've started feeling nostalgic, so I picked up the new Megadeth and Motley Crue (see review) and it inspired me to write a long needed article (relax, it won't waste these pages) on the pros and cons of aging rock stars. Megadeth will go in the con section stating that age and sobriety have stifled hard-edged creativity! Go get a case of liquor and try again! - Gary McGarvey Jr.

MELONY - *Satisfaction* (Geffen Records) Wow, talk about a completely from out-in-left-field surprise, a splendidly subversive, ostensibly commercial rock album which affixes universal themes -- bummed-out from bad memories, loneliness, the pros and cons of being a rock star, and so on -- to an overwhelming, muscular, full-blooded, comin' on like gangbusters sonic juggernaut rumble that bulldozes over everything in its path. Still, what gives this album a sharp, striking, stinging edge is the band's deliciously vicious contorting and distorting of both the English language and deceptively threadbare subject matter, which take on very twisted, unsettling new meanings due to the warped context they're applied in. "Big Dipper," an alleged "look at me, I'm a big rock star" ego-strutting number, is a sterling example of the band's bold willingness to confound and surmount the listener's expectations: the song ends with a brutally bleak twist in which the whole thing is revealed to be nothing more than the pathetic delusions of a sleeping teenage nobody! It's this wickedly clever and cutting acid-drenched sensibility which makes *Satisfaction* such a dark, dangerous, and thus hugely detectable delight, the kind of perfectly poisonous, nasty pleasure which joyfully trashes idealism and elevates out-and-out cynicism into something approximating perverse greatness. - Joe Wawryzniak

MEPHISKAPHELES - *Maximum Perversion* (Moon Ska Records) This is one of the few bands that are better live than they are recorded. I like ska but this just don't do anything for me. It's that soul ska with cheesy lyrics and bad horn lines that I'm sure everybody knows and most people hate/dislike. This reminds me of my 6th grade jazz band concert with my spanish teacher singing. Maybe next time, eh fellas? - Conor Moore

This time Satan is feeling a little more mellow, but his words still ring with the same uumph! If you don't like the ska of Mephiskapheles, you're a big old loser. Sell blood and bodily fluids to purchase this. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

MEXICO 70 - *Imperial Comet Hour* (Red Ant, 9720 Willshire Boulevard, Suite 400 Beverly Hills, CA 90212) Windsor, England is the very last place one expects to be the breeding ground of a folksy, low-key, Americana-obsessed pop rock foursome, but that's indeed the case with this divinely winsome band. Gentle, lulling acoustic guitar riffs, husky, vibrant vocals, a sharp, striking knack for cutting wordplay (the tersely observant opening lines of "Road Movie in You" score high points here), a nice, mellow, conversational style, peppy'n'perky arrangements, uniformly topflight playing, a lovely cover of late, great folk singer/songwriter Tim Hardin's beautifully wistful "It'll Never Happen Again," and an engaging emphasis on subject matter we can all readily relate to -- girl you want, but don't have, potent urge to just hit the road and leave responsibility behind, burning desire to overcome doldrums of plain ol' ordinary existence, that sorta commonplace stuff -- make this album a warmly accessible and endearing charm. Sweet, simple, and, in its own modest, rootsy, laid-back way, quite splendid, too. - Joe Wawryzniak

MILLION SIX (Satellite Records, 920 E. Colorado, #151, Pasadena, CA 90609) A 5 Song EP from this California three-piece. Your basic SoCal. Guitar-heavy pop punk mix that was OK for the ten minutes it lasted. They cover the Stones' "Play with Fire", but I wouldn't have recognized it if my classic-rock fan wife hadn't told me. "Fucked up on drugs, that's how you make friends" is a great song line. Good potential, I'll wait and see how the next one sounds. - Tom Brebric

MINDSET (Noise Records, 7510 Sunset Blvd. Ste. 515, Los Angeles, CA 90046) Can anybody say: KORN? Get the fuck outta here with that shit.

The music is awesome, I'll give them that, but the words and vocals are fuckin' pathetic. Their bio includes a few reviews saying they're original in their style. Somebody is obviously going deaf! -Phil Pinto

MIRACLE MILE - *To Burn Together* (Pinch-Hit Records, 4001 Pacific Coast Highway, Suite 104, Terrence, CA 90505) Faith, religion, love gone sour, choosing to be either good or bad, and man's unfortunate tendency to fall sway to sin and wickedness aren't the easiest themes to address in rock music. This remarkable Gothic rock fivesome pulls off the arduous task of addressing said themes with genuinely profound and provocative results, which alone rates as one truly extraordinary feat. The fact that the album never comes across as either too preachy or overly pretentious makes that feat all the more astonishing. Boasting a heady, heavy, high density atmosphere, grimly reflective lyrics, topnotch arrangements in which wah-wah enhanced guitars, Hammond B-3 piano, synths, drums, and bass all seamlessly come together to produce a thick, sumptuous, slowly churning groove that's positively dripping with a powerfully funky gloom-doom moodiness, and chillingly cold, matter-of-fact vocals, this darkly brooding and disturbing, but still compulsively listenable album gets under your skin and stays there throughout the duration of 15 harrowingly good songs. Listen, think, and worry. -Joe Wawryzniak

THE MR. T EXPERIENCE - *Revenge Is Sweet, And So Are You* (Lookout!) The first time I listened to this I thought it was not as good as their older stuff but then it grew on me and now I can't take it out of my CD player. This could be their best stuff to date, does this band just keep getting better? All fans of pop punk will be pleased with this one so go run on out and pick yourself up a copy. -Conor Moore

MOMMYHEADS (DGC/Geffen) Hard to believe that this is the same band that used to play with Letch Patrol at CBGB's. Although the band started out playing a more loose & raucous music, since their move to San Francisco they've become a different animal entirely. The songs on this disc, the band's fifth full-length, are quiet and subtle. Produced by biggie Don Was, most have a feel similar to a Beatles ballad, relaxed yet careful and pointed. -Johnny Puke

MORE FUEL FOR BURNING PEOPLE - *Sitting Breathless In New Chairs* (Ruido, PO Box 7141, Richmond, VA 23221) Songs that start unbelievably slow then pick up to a basic rock beat. There is a lot of odd guitar work here, along with other odd sounds. Kind of reminds me of the weirder Sonic Youth stuff. -Denis Sheehan

MORNING GLORIES - *Let The Body Hang* (Cargo) The pundits and the prophets of popular music keep telling us that hairy-fisted, feedback-ridden, angst-infected rock & roll is a relic of the past, that tomorrow's faves are going to be kinder, gentler and, well...more synthetic-sounding than pop tuneage has been as of late. I'll be damned if I know what they're talking about, 'cause for every new Alannis Morrisette sound-alike I hear on the airwaves I get half-a-dozen discs in the mail that come across on the box like "Seattle circa 1991." Case in point: NYC's Morning Glories, whose recent effort *Let The Body Hang* sounds nothing so much like a thick cup of black coffee during a hangover. Like heavy metal, I suspect that grunge rock isn't going anywhere except underground. As these things go, Morning Glories are better than most, but there's nothing here, really, that wasn't done better years ago. -Reverend K

THE MOTARDS - *Saturday Night Special Ed.* (Empty) This is what you've been waiting for! Loud, sloppy garage punk from Austin. I have not stopped smiling since I put this disc on to sample the Motards' furiously brief assaults in the spirit of early New Bomb Turks, among others. The Motards rip through thirteen songs in twenty-four minutes and you will be exhausted when it is finally over. Johnny Motards' flesh-ripping vocals scorch each song, but really stand out on gems like "Drunk Girls" ("Drunk girls turn me on!"), "Alien Autopsy", and "Girl Like You". These beer loving animals also grace you with a version of the Ramones "Freak of Nature". The Motards have been making some classic noise for a few years now and have reached legendary status in some areas, and deservingly so. *Saturday Night Special Ed.* should either convert the non-believers or simply smash them. Either way, this album rocks. -Rich Quinlan

MOTLEY CRUE - *Generation Swine* (Elektra) See Megadeth review & change one thing. Sober up enough to know when it's time to quit (it's all about bowing out gracefully)! You're wasting my money! Hmmm...I wonder how the new W.A.S.P. album is?! -Gary McGarvey Jr.

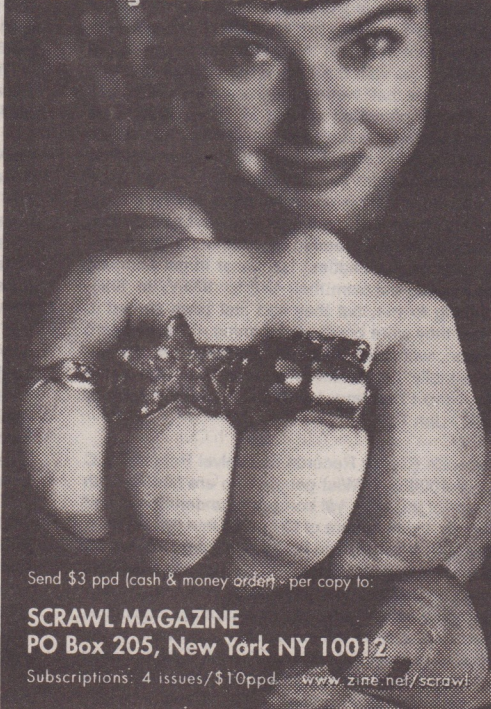
THE MULTIPLE CAT - *Universe Shall Mean the Self* (Guilt Ridden Pop/ TRG) The Multiple Cat, primarily a studio project conceived and carried out by Pat Stolley plays sophisticated indie-pop which combines the sugary elements of pop with experimental touches to create elegant and interesting stuff. The quiet serenity of "B.B. Kitty" opens up the record and makes room for more rollicking efforts like "I Like a Bridge". TMC foil the traditional indie cliches with such subtle touches as Jeff Wichman's trumpet on "Contact". While the music here seems outwardly simple, like most good pop, there are textures within the songs that are woven into each track, creating a more covert complexity. This is obvious on songs like "Devils" and "Snakedogs". The band delivers the "universe" in twenty-six intriguing minutes of music. -Rich Quinlan

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL/MAN IS THE BASTARD Split CD (Alternative Tentacles) Mumia Abu-Jamal is - depending on your political orientation - a convicted murderer or a political prisoner, currently awaiting execution on Death Row. This disc - the proceeds of which will benefit his legal defense - consists of several short spoken word pieces by Abu-Jamal, recorded from prison; spoken word messages of support from the likes of Allen Ginsburg and Jello Biafra; and four corrosive grindcore songs from Man Is The Bastard. The spoken word pieces help explain why the authorities have tried to muzzle this man - Mumia Abu-Jamal is no mush-mouthed revolutionary, but a brilliantly articulate and well-reasoned public speaker who states his case with a stunning clarity of vision and purpose. The "music" from Man/Bastard will blister the paint off your walls if you play it loud enough. -Jim T.

MURDER 1 - *Shopping For Porn* (NMG Records, P.O. Box 50550, Phoenix AZ 85076) Although I felt like a little more work on their lyrics would help this Newark, NJ punk/metal band focus their attack, in the immortal words of the Kids in the Hall "They certainly do know how to rock." There's even a couple of possible classics here, including songs like "Break these Chains" and "J Crew Girl". The last song and title track, "Shopping For Porn," is a mellow bluesy number with a very catchy keyboard part. With the cool snippets thrown into the mix, I think this is definitely a band that's going places. -Chris Duncan

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SCRAWL is a music, culture and arts magazine with both a do-it-yourself attitude and an unmistakable visual identity. SCRAWL features large, clear and clever photographs and in-depth interviews with today's underground bands and cutting edge visual artists. In each issue you can also find a wide range of CDs, live music, zines, comics, & book reviews.

Photo: Dawn Avagliano
of Panties, by Sam LaHoz

MXPX - *Life in General* (A&M/Tooth And Nail) MxPx are one of the finest pop punk bands around and this one does nothing to disgrace that remark. Originally released in 1996 on Tooth & Nail it's now out on A&M. Seventeen songs of energetic, melodic, poppiness to get even your mom tapping her toes while she's baking those delicious cookies. I can definitely see these guys being the 'next big thing', they have a Green Day feel but with cooler lyrics and more overall fun. Go get this one NOW! - Conor Moore

NEGATIVIAND - *Dispepsi* (www.negativland.com) To listen to these guys because they're good musicians is daft. What they say is what's really important. This time the attack is on the multinational cola corporations and how they saturate our very existence. I'd hate to be their lawyer. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

NEW SWEET BREATH - *A Shotgun Down an Avalanche* (Big Top Records, 955 Massachusetts Ave. Suite 115, Cambridge MA 02139) The new release from New Sweet Breath is short, sweet and incredibly harmonious. The band skips, croons and rolls through ten songs in barely over twenty minutes. That is too bad at times, for some of this stuff, particularly "Avalanche", "Something New" and "Arianna" are so damn catchy you want them to keep playing. This is a very satisfying little record from a band that mixes pop melodies with punk energy, without churning out generic punk-pop. The band expands the realms of its sound on this release, experimenting with different soundscapes, the best example being "When Sunny Gets Blue", the trippy concluding track that features DJ Dopey, which by the way, is another one of the songs here that you could listen to forever. I was pleasantly shocked by this record and hope the boys can make their good ideas last a little longer next time! - Rich Quinlan

NOBODY'S - *The Smell Of Victory* (Hopeless) This is the follow-up to their excellent debut. They maintain their snotty attitude and the fun idiotic lyrics that they're known for. However, the music has gotten faster with a louder guitar sound to the point where it borders on hardcore. To me that's a good thing, but unfortunately the tunes are a bit less catchy this time around, yet this record is still worth picking up. - Rick Spithoff

THE NO-TALENTS - (Mordam Records, P.O. Box 420988, S.F. CA 94124-0988) Well, the name just about says it all, no talent. Stupid three power-chord crap with terrible female vocals. Garage/77 style punk feel that makes me want to puke but I'll let you decide. At least the singer is pretty hot! - Conor Moore

NO FRAUD - *Babewatch* (Kevin Allee Records, PO Box 2510, Ft. Charlotte FL 33949) Dan Destructo has been fronting No Fraud down in Florida for longer than I can remember and he certainly hasn't slowed down. No Fraud plays fast gritty punk in the style of the early L.A. bands like Black Flag, Circle Jerks, and Dead Kennedys. And like those bands, No Fraud has a good sense of humor and a powerful lead singer who snarls lyrics with snotty, sometimes venomous/ sometimes comic effect. This CD collects material previously available only on vinyl or StiffPole's "Six Packs To Go" compilation- Jim T.

NOFX - *So Long And Thanks For All The Shoes* (Epitaph) To be honest, I have never been much of a NOFX fan and have had a hard time understanding why everyone else was. After listening to *So Long....*, I am still not a fan, but there were a handful of tracks here that really made me smile. The average length of the songs here are roughly two minutes long and are quick bursts of punk fire. "Murder the Government" and the hilarious "Monosyllabic Girl" (I took her to the aquarium/she said shark/ I took her to the planetarium/She said dark), both clock in at under a minute and are absolutely brilliant pieces of truly fun punk-pop. Unfortunately, the jokes and the guitar riffs grow a little stale, and by the time the guys reach their ill-fated attack on Kathleen Hanna, "Kill Rock Stars", you can predict every move the band makes. NOFX is a perfect band for younger kids who just want fun, fast stuff to skate to. However, a more advanced ear can pick up on the bands weaknesses. They are a group of guys who clearly have fun and enjoy themselves, which you do not see enough of. However, this fun grows thin over the course of a sixteen track release. -Rich Quinlan

NO USE FOR A NAME - *Making Friends* (Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690) A fast 'n' loud pop-punk outfit with a very big, tight sound. Lots of melody and harmony, with a style not unlike a faster, rawer, more powerful Bad Religion, but without all of the big words. The final listed track (there's a few of those annoying "hidden" tracks after it), "Fields of Athenry" blends fast pop-punk and Celtic folk melody for a

really cool effect, making it the stand-out track of the bunch. That's really saying alot, since the whole album is pretty damn good. - Paul Silver

OF MONTREAL - *Cherry Peel* (Bar/None) Of Montreal aren't. They're an Athens, GA indie pop band. Here's a band who claim to write record and play gigs all from the comfort of their own home. "Sometimes we'll get together on Sunday nights, have pot luck and play stuff we've been working on for each other," writes Kevin Barnes the guitar player in their bio. Lots of Beatles/Big Star influences. Nice songs, endearing lo-fi recording. It's tough to believe these guys are as naive as they try to come across, but maybe it doesn't matter. The album sounds nice and will make your evening fresh and clean. It won't blow you away, but then, they aren't trying to. If summer camp were a way of life, Of Montreal would write the sound track. On tour in a living room near you. -Alex Saville

OLD HICKORY - *Brain Travels Before the Heart Stops* (Mootron Records, 4470 Sunset Boulevard, Suite 527 Los Angeles, CA 90027) This utterly endearing 8 song mini-LP offers a pleasing collection of very eclectic tunes culled from the Los Angeles pop rock band's earliest recordings, including 8-tracks, 4-tracks, and even a pair of songs cut in one band member's apartment. Given the recordings' paltry origins, this disc's sound is surprisingly crisp and smooth. However, what makes this EP so good is the diversity of the songs themselves: "Pretty Girlfriend," "Faith Drives You Home," and "Nothing Told" showcase the band's subdued, thoughtful light pop side, the rougher cuts "Salopan" and "Diamonds and Coffeecake" prove the band can also rock it up somethin' hot, "Slo-Boy Meets Snakecharmer" is a lengthy, lilting instrumental excursion into pure kicked-back sonic bliss, and "Rollover" offers some lovely vocal harmonizing. For anyone unfamiliar with this extremely talented and versatile band, this EP makes for an excellent introduction to their admirably wide-open musical vision. - Joe Wawryzniak

OJOROJO - *Can You Keep Your Sanity?* (East Bay Menace, PO Box 3313, Oakland CA 94609) This band borders on death metal without falling into an all too familiar trap. The playing here is intense, and to their credit, very tight. The band bolts out of the blocks on the opening track "Broken World," which sets a tone for the rest of the disc. Unfortunately, the band unleashes its entire musical arsenal within the first song, including bursts of speed, mosh breaks, and the sharing of vocal responsibilities among the members. Lead singer Jeneane adds a nice touch, as her extremely raw vocal approach sounds all the more menacing thanks to her male bandmates. While this certainly is not in the same league as the more refined metal out there, such as the Relapse roster, fans of this should give Ojorojo a chance. "Trapped Inside", "Disease" "No Hope" and "A Show of Force" are other examples of this bands power. - Rich Quinlan

THE ORANGE PEELS - *Square* (Minty Fresh, Inc., P.O. Box 577400 Chicago, IL 60657) Dyed-in-the-wool practitioners of the unjustly ignored West Coast sound (think pop-rock at its most appealingly sweet and polished, with a laudable emphasis on concise, thoughtful songwriting and catchy, melodic arrangements), this hugely endearing San Francisco quartet mix a welcome dose of glossy, glistening pure pop musicianship with a pleasant, positive, uplifting attitude for their topflight major world-wide debut album. Bubbly, bouncy, and endlessly effervescent, *Three* hits the splendid sonic spot with unerring tunefulness and exuberance. Hell, the beautifully fluid country and western instrumental "Spaghetti-O Western" alone makes this one a keeper. - Joe Wawryzniak

JIM O'ROURKE - *Bad Timing* (Drag City Records) Absolutely beautiful. This is a different album than one would expect from a solo outing from this experimental musician. It's similar, in a sense, to the stuff that's been coming from bands such as Tortoise, in that it's a nice, quiet, calm bit of music to relax with and reflect on whatever one wants to reflect. Whereas Tortoise do this with a jazz influence, Jim uses a folk influence on which to base this latest effort. Lots of beautiful folk guitar, demonstrating Jim's musicianship and versatility. There's several guests on this disc, adding touches such as harmonica, trumpet, french horn, glockenspiel, and so on, in just the right places with the same delicate touch. Highly recommended.

OUI 73 - *Princess* (Mary's Lounge, PO Box 1462, Buffalo NY 14223) Sonic pop, with some post-psychedelic guitar excursions layered over very solid, melodic rock songs with an almost power-pop sense of catchiness. Think Plimsouls meet Sonic Youth. I think you should check these guys out. - Jim T.

still more record reviews...

PALINDROMES - *Yum Yum Pop Yum Yum* (Twee Kitten Records, 1547 Palos Verdes Mall #213, Walnut Creek CA 94596) A cute pop band backed by three boys and one girl. Kind of reminds me of four friends that have been close since their pre-teen years, that hang out together a lot and remember things they use to do in their younger years. It's like sitting on a couch with three good friends and a cup of hot cocoa on a cold winters night. I like that feeling. -Eva Silverman

PANEL DONOR - *Surprise Bath* (Sonic BubbleGum, PO Box 35504, Brighton, Ma 02135) First off, the lead singer can't sing. He tries, but he keeps reaching for notes that are way out of reach. The music itself is tough to classify. There is a hint of psychedelia, mixed with alternative dance beats, littered with classic sounding guitars. The songs often change rhythm and beat, leaving you stranded. I did not like this disc. - Denis Sheehan

PARADISE LOST - *One Second* (Music for Nations) Their sixth album is here and it's amazing. Actually, the songs that are good are excellent, but the bad ones just seem to drag on and on. Outta 12 tracks, a good 7 song, or so are definitely catchy. The vocals are way different; they're not as hard as the last album, but still great enough to keep you listening. - Phil Pinto

PEGBOY - *Cha Cha Da More* (Quarterstick Records, PO Box 25342, Chicago, IL 60625) They're finally back with a new full length! Pegboy define the classic Chicago sound. Big bold guitar, intense melodic vocals, pounding drums, and throbbing bass. After listening to pop-punk, Pegboy-style, you'll think all those East Bay outfits are weak shit. This outing produces a slower Pegboy, on average. The tempos are down a notch or so on some cuts, though not the energy level. The cover tune on this album is "Surrender," and is probably the only part of the album that I didn't care for that much. Buy this now. Hey, I got through the entire review without even mentioning Naked Raygun once! - Paul Silver

PERFECT FORCE FEED - "Miserable Weakness" EP (Crooked jaw records PO Box 331 Baltimore, Maryland 21203) This short, four song EP arrived with absolutely no background information, but from what I could figure out, this trio hails from Baltimore. The tracks here are all well crafted straight-forward rock with just enough noise to keep you guessing, especially on "Odds Are Never Even", and the disturbing "Consensual Rape". "Goodnight Olympia" is the strongest of the four with a catchy and crunchy riff, plus a chorus that will bury itself in your brain. This is one of those releases that comes out of nowhere and really takes you by surprise. At only fourteen minutes, PPF grants you a far too fleeting sample of their talent. This is one of those rare bands that can create music which is both angry and introspective. I hope I hear more from these guys. - Rich Quinlan

PEZZ - *One Last Look...Bash On Regardless* (BYO Records, PO Box 67A64, Los Angeles CA 90067) True to their name, Pezz plays sugary punk that will get you pumped up like a good sugar rush should. This is fuzzy punk in the BYO spirit. The band reminded me acts like Weston or a grittier Mr.T Experience. You are offered 15 songs that revolve around similar ideas and musical delivery. I was pleasantly surprised later on the disc with songs like "Gracias" and "Pureshot", two cuts that displayed more muscle. Unfortunately, I had to wade through eight tracks before this style emerged. The record finished strong, and I was left with a good taste in my mouth. I believe the true test of this band would come at a live show, for the songs here are conducive to some crazed sing alongs. Overall, nothing special, but worth a shot. - Rich Quinlan

PIGFACE - *A New High in Llow* (Invisible, PO Box 16008, Chicago, IL 60616) "High" on my list of expectations and "low" on delivery. By far, one of the least interesting albums put out by this ever-changing band. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

PINEAL VENTANA - *Breathe As You Might* (Altered Records, PO Box 724677, Atlanta, GA 31139-1677) Powerful in a fractured kind of way. The percussion is always driving and the bass lines are grinding. The best way to describe them is piecing bits of past music into a totally futuristic feel (in a fractured way). - Gary McGarvey Jr.

PINHEAD CIRCUS - *Detailed Instructions for the Self Involved* (BYO Records, PO Box 67A64, Los Angeles CA 90067) Now that the Bouncing Souls have officially joined the real business world and signed with Epitaph, BYO now fills that gaping hole with another speedy, somewhat goofy punk band that loves to sing about miserable relationship experiences. Pinhead Circus does absolutely nothing new, but at least they are entertaining, and considering today's music scene, that is saying something. Most of us can relate to the lyrics of "Petty Motivation" and "Paper Thin", but we have heard the same chord progressions too many times before. While this trio does smash out some infectious not a guitar solo to be found punk-pop, their

formula wears thin beginning halfway through the record. Yet, for some inexplicable reason, I ended up liking this disc in the end. Yes, it is the equivalent of musical ear candy, but the bands' sense of humor ("Carefree Metal Daze" and "A-Word" are two examples) is a major asset. These guys also play hard and openly lay their loser relationship past on the table, humiliating themselves for our amusement. My biggest complaint comes with the hidden track. First off, everyone and their brother is storing away "secret" songs, which is annoying, but Pinhead Circus does a ripping version of Night Rangers' "Don't Tell Me You Love Me". No need to hide that boys! - Rich Quinlan

PAIN (Nuclear Blast America) When NIN's first album came out, everyone was amazed that one person could create a full album that was so good (at least where I lived). These days that concept is commonplace and uninspiring -- until now. Peter Tagigren (Hypocrisy) did this entire project by himself, and it's darn good. Norwegian industrialized metal that's got more crunch than most bands today. This album is not just meant for the metal people alone. - Gary McGarvey Jr.



Luis, Pansy Division

PANSY DIVISION - *More Lovin' From Our Oven* (Lookout! Records) Another album from this band, woo hoo!.. What did I do to deserve this treat? Well, another album, another good 15 songs about sexual flavors and other delicious treats. These cute boys with their pop punk attitude and sweet looks will sure make you want to pick this up. Hey I did it...and so should you. If you haven't heard PD before, I'll let you know that they are pro-gay rights (of course, the band members are gay, but that is besides the point). Most of their songs involve some sort of homosexual love affair. Their charisma is right on. I found them last year when they played the Lookout! Records night in NYC, rawk on! Go buy their albums! - Eva Silverman

PINK NOISE TEST - *Plasticized* (Interscope Records) Pink Noise Test have only been around since 1994, but you wouldn't know it from this CD (also their first full length release). Garage pop with random bursts of noise and clutter that keep you bopping along but still a little unsure of where you'll step next. The tape loops and drum machine parts make for a good ride that keep things interesting from one song to the next. I definitely like it most when they are keeping things on the pop side (kind of reminds me of Alex Chilton) with songs like Girl, I Can't Tell You, All The Same To Me and Never Be the Same. A very good first release. - Chris Duncan

PLAN A PROJECT - "Anthems To You" 10-inch EP (Records of Rebellion, PO Box 700215, Goulds FL 33032) If you haven't already heard anything from these three Jersey boys, you are missing out. Their original punk with a bit of poppy flavor and ska-titude will provoke you to go to every show they play within a 200 mile radius. That's how it is for me, anyway. Plan A's lyrics deal with the upkeep of their morals when dealing with music as a commodity, and give off that extra push to go do something DIY whether it be a zine, band or show. This 10-inch is worth every penny of the 7 bux, plus with the motivation and inspiration that the music gives you, you'll be on yr way to making the difference. - Eva Silverman

POWERHOUSE - *No Regrets* (Blackout! Records PO Box 1575 NYC NY 10009) This is huge sounding hardcore with a slight hip hop flavor in appearance and attitude, but with a pure punk delivery. Musically, this reminded me of Agnostic Front, or the more contemporary 25 TaLife. This is definitely not for the faint of heart, although I found some of the material here a little repetitive. However, Powerhouse does live up to its name, beginning with the opening bass surge that kickstarts "Hypocrite" to the vocals of Chris on almost every track. The bands lyrics are grounded firmly in everyday reality, addressing the issues that face kids today and the lack of faith for a brighter tomorrow. Not particularly cheery, but Powerhouse is a band about ugly, real hardcore, free from preaching and politics. Tracks like "Numb" and "Chokehold" are furious assaults that hit you from all angles. Granted, there are some moments of predictability here, but let's face it; in a market as inundated as today's hardcore scene, that has to almost be expected and Powerhouse does tend to keep these moments to a minimum. In the end, this is a solid record and I was left with the desire to see these guys live. - Rich Quinlan

PRY - "High Wire Act" EP (Some Records, 405 W.14th Street No.3, New York NY 10014) On this EP, Pry delivers 5 songs featuring interesting musicianship and personal lyrics. The sound was unfortunately a little thin, and not truly representative of their power. However, songs like "Ziplock" and "Damaged Goods" do allow a look into the unique bald head of singer/songwriter Gavin Van Vlack. The band toes the line between hardcore and progressive rock. It is obvious that their sound is still developing, as the band sometime struggles with a direction. However, this does create a unique listening experience from a band that has the ability to destroy you and leave you guessing. High Wire Act is a step forward in the maturity and honing of Pry as a band, and this sample of their skill left me curious about what future efforts will sound like. I can say from personal experience that they are a strong band live, with Gavin being both a musical and visual sight to behold. Hopefully, future recordings will better capture the force behind the music of Pry. - Rich Quinlan

PUD - "The One On The Wall Is A Trout. I'm The Shark!" (Recess Records, PO Box 1112 Torrance, CA 90505) Snotty '77 singalong punk here in the vein of bands like Stiff Little Fingers and The Clash. If you dig the Swinging Utters and Rancid, you'll love these guys. - Rick K.

POLVO - *Shapes* (Touch & Go Records, P.O. Box 25520, Chicago IL 60625) Along with bands like Come and Superchunk, Polvo were once hailed as saviors of the indie rock world. Not unlike many of their indie brethren, however, Polvo have always failed to translate to disc the enormous energy and charisma they bring to the live shows they've built their reputation on. If you're a kid sitting in Peoria listening to a Polvo disc, you'd never know what the brouhaha was all about. Unfortunately, the band's latest attempt, *Shapes*, also falls short of the mark. A haphazard collection of discordant instrumentation and partially-conceived tunes, *Shapes* is exactly that - a formless, free-falling mess that fails to capture the band's true talents. - Reverend K

PORCELAIN BOYS - *Away Awhile...* (Pop Kid records, 16 Raleigh Ln., Wayne NJ 07470) This was a tricky album to accurately describe, for it would be easy to write the Porcelain Boys off as simplistic pop with a rock tinge. While this trio does croon, they also bash away with enough abandon to make any fan of power pop blush with delight. *Away Awhile* is a record that improves with each successive play. Erik Kaiser delivers both solid guitar work and emotional, occasionally pretty vocals, especially on "If You Were Real" and "Hey Melissa". The band speeds things up on "Donuts" and my personal favorite "Squeaky Clean". Bands like Sinkhole came to mind, but the Boys' brand of music is smoother and even less threatening. While the three members do not deviate from their musical course very often, they do have enough crunch mixed with pop harmony to keep you listening. I may have been prejudice towards a band with a name like the Porcelain Boys, but I found myself surprised at how much I liked this. This is both fun and refreshing. - Rich Quinlan

PURGED - *Form Of Release* (Metal Blade) Australian metal at its finest. The album is filled with intricate tempos and breakdowns. The format of the music and vocals aren't new, but they have a definite captivating groove. Their bassist does some killer back-up vocals along with the singer's distinct vocals. - Phil Pinto

PURPLE IVY SHADOWS - *No Less the Trees Than the Stars* (Slow River Records, Shetland Park, 27 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970) While Purple Ivy Shadows breaks no new ground, they do produce some fairly solid pop music. And, while I generally do not like anything that has even a hint of country twang in it, a few of the songs here do. Not to say that they are country songs, but they have a hint of twang. And they're nice and pleasant to listen to. Basically, this is your basic guitar/bass/drums laid back pop stuff. - Paul Silver

PURPLE IVY SHADOWS - "Under & OK" EP (Slow River Records, Shetland Park, 27 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970) This 6-song EP was released in anticipation of the full-length reviewed above. It's really nice, quiet, pop music with a little more of a spacey feel than the album. While there's no musical innovations here, it's still a really nice listen. - Paul Silver

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS - *The Wonderful World Of...* (Iron Man Music Group, 17357 Tribune Street, Granada Hills CA 91344) It just goes to show ya that you really can't keep a good band down. Case in point: The Pursuit Of Happiness, whose 1989 debut *Love Junk* set the stage for a minor pop revival, albeit a movement subsequently crushed by the steam-roller angst of the Seattle scene. In retrospect, the gleeful and good-natured goofiness of T.P.O.H. frontman Moe Berg seems even more out of place today than it did then. But as *The Wonderful World Of...* proves, Berg & company have lost none of the delightful pop chops that they showed on their acclaimed debut. The songs here are old school pop/rock, with strains of Alex Chilton and Todd Rundgren (the band's former producer) infusing every tune, Berg's whip-smart lyrics literally dripping with innocence and intelligence. If you're looking for an antidote to the hollow and vacuous fare you'll find on the radio these days, look no further than *The Wonderful World Of The Pursuit Of Happiness*. - Reverend K

QUIXOTE (Makato, Box 5043, Kalamazoo MI 49005) The bassist and drummer play great off one another. The rhythm of all the songs is very cool. The guitarist often sounds out of place, like he is playing a different song. Vocals sound too much like Perry Farrell. Although Quixote is a little more hardcore, the music borders on the Porno For Pyros sound. - Denis Sheehan

RANDOM KILLING - *Stranded* (Raw Energy, 266 Maplehurst Ave., Willowdale, Ontario, M2N 3C4, Canada) Raw, fast 'n' loud, obnoxious, spit laden hardcore punk. I love old school hardcore. I've been listening to it almost since its inception. And this is pretty good stuff. But a lot of the songs on this disc end up sounding alike. Some people may say that all hardcore sounds alike, but it's not true. There can be quite a bit of variety within the punk genre, and I wish Random Killing exhibited this more. Listening to a small handful of songs seemingly repeated over and over can get tedious. - Paul Silver

RATTLEBONE-(945 Huff Ave., Manville, NJ 08335) Just when you thought Hard Rock/Metal was, gone forever, is when bands, like this come out in the underground and keep it alive and going. This is a decent album, actually, a 6 song EP. The basic format of the music and lyrics is basic but catchy. They're also very good musicians. - Phil Pinto

THE REAL SWINGER (V.M.L., PO Box 183, Franklin Park IL 60131) Fast, fun and furious pop from this Italian act. The guys rip through such great songs as "Teddy Bear", "Thorazine", "You're a Monster" and my personal favorite "I'm Sending a Tape (to America)". This record is pure fun. The playing is not spectacular, and at times is a little predictable. However, the bands' adrenaline and lust for enjoyment is hypnotic and will help get you past the simplicity. Fans of bands like Mr. T. Experience and other quirky punk pop acts will love this. Credit has to go to VML here, for continuing to scan the globe and release music from great bands. - Rich Quinlan

REGATTA 69 -*Prime Time* (Moon) Move away Hootie, ska is conquering your town. I'm starting to notice that some of the ska bands I really like are coming from places I would never expect. In this case, it's Chapel Hill, NC. That's the hot spot. Musically, Regatta 69 fully represents the 3rd wave of ska, mellow with a tempo, superb vocals, and lyrics that are humorous yet feel contained. A worthy purchase even for those of you I don't like "ska." P.S. There's a bonus track on Track 69. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

REGULATORWATTS - *The Aesthetics of No-Drag* (Slowdime Records, PO Box 414, Arlington VA 22210) On one level, this release sounds like typical DC-esque guitar squall. The sound is big, swirling and somewhat distant. However, Regulatorwatts play a darker, more disturbing version of guitar heavy music. This is another band that prides itself on creating mood rather than a catchy chorus. While I respect their attempt, this disc falls into the trap of repetition. The emotion being conveyed here is obvious, however, there is little distinction from song to song. The release ends up sounding like one long, drawn out track, instead of a collection of uniquely detailed pieces. While songs like "Halifax", "Pemberton Red", and "Firecrackerjack Tippy" are wild rides, you have the feeling that you have been on this same ride just moments before. - Rich Quinlan

RHYTHM COLLISION - *Collision Course: Unsafe Driving in 19 Easy Steps* (Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 7000-177 Alta Loma, CA 91701) Prepare to be seriously battered, clobbered, pummeled, and otherwise just plain bashed around as this intensely crankin' 19 track CD collection of relent-

lessly cookin'-with-primo-unleaded-gas funky, junky, punky cuts gleaned from various EPs, LPs, and 7" inch discs roars forth from your stereo. Staunchly adhering to a ferociously blunt, berserk, subtle-as-a-battering-ram abrasive'n'aggressive sonic onslaught approach, these wonderfully wild-assed California kooks alternate between hilariously brutal covers of the Ramones' "Outsider," the Clash's "Tommy Gun," and even an especially vicious nuke of the theme song from "Cheers," and such neat'n'nasty originals as the caustic "Hippie Now," the kick-ass car tune "Turbo-Colt," and the punked-out beach number "Didn't Know." Raw, rude, and more raucous than your average college fraternity beer blast, this unceasingly punchy punk rock album joyfully caters to the unruly teenage anarchist in all of us. - Joe Wawryzniak

RHYTHM COLLISION - *Crunch Time* (Collision) This is one of those rare live records that's worthwhile. Recorded in France in '96, RC rip through 19 of their punk hits, played somewhat faster and more raw than on their studio recordings. Listen to this and find out for yourself why Rhythm Collision is one of the more fun and tight live bands around. Also includes a short interview and 3 songs played live on a radio show. - Rick Spithoff

RIG - *King of the Soft Serve* (Cruz Records) Sampled cacophony of sounds that includes heavy guitar chords and lots of percussion. Press releases are often bullshit, but this band's promo lives up to its claims: "accompanied by a barrage of annoying samples and an abominable rhythm track." I was hoping for industrial and instead got irritating noise. And no, it's not the same thing. - Tom Brebric

ROADSIDE MONUMENT - *Eight Hours Away From Being a Man* (Tooth and Nail, PO Box 12698, Seattle WA 98111-4698) Intense and interesting only begin to describe this wildly powerful disc. There are certainly a large number of bands who enjoy mixing up tempos within songs and creating tunes that feature a musical calm before the storm. However, there are not many out there who can match the pure explosive quality of Roadside Monument. *Eight Hours* begins with a gloriously loud barrage called "Sperm Ridden Guilt". What a start! This trio alternates between moments of quiet and anarchy with effortless grace, making the unannounced guitar detonations all the more powerful. However, it is the moody, atmospheric beauty that is actually the most disturbing. The band is destined to inevitably bludgeon you, you just have no idea when its coming, and you know you are helpless. The band is in complete control of you throughout

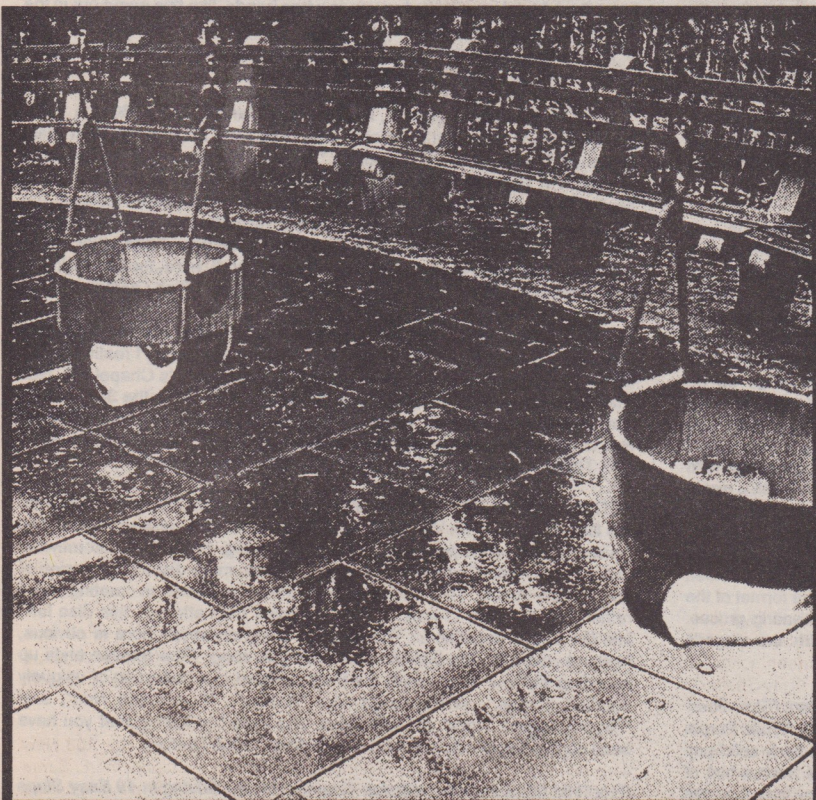
the listen, telling stories with great depth, using sparse lyrics. This is a true testament to the power of drums and guitars. You must hear John Wayne Marina's, "Tired of Living With People Who Are Tired of Living", the gorgeous "Apartment Over the Peninsula" and my personal favorite, "Compressor District". Disturbing, haunting and mandatory listening. - Rich Quinlan

ROMPECABEZA - *Ball Peen Companion* (Huel Records, POB 21134, Winston-Salem NC 27120-1134) Dirty, distant, punk-sounding. In-your-face. Discombobulated melodies. Flexible arrangements. Disjointed vocals. Odd sense of timing. Exciting for a change. - Paul Hanson

ROYAL CROWN REVUE - *Caught In The Act Live!* (Suridog Records, 315 First St.#100, Encinitas CA 92024) Swing music may be the ultimate in retrospective culture borrowing, but what an era to use (no bellbottoms here!) If you went to the Warped tour, then you know how cool these guys really are; if not then you'll find out when you buy this! - Gary McGarvey Jr.

RULE 62 (Maverick) Formed by Brian Coakley, former guitarist/songwriter for The Cadillac Tramps. The music is a blend of Southern California punk with pop music structure. I could hear the punk influences, but all in all, the disc screams pop music. The tune "She Sells" caught my ear. This disc is the kind that bridges main stream music lovers to alternative music. I found it kind of boring. - Denis Sheehan

TOM RUSSELL - *The Long Way Around* (Hightone Records, 220 4th Street # 101 Oakland, CA 94607) Best-of compilation albums are always a risky proposition: they either do a sterling job of representing an artist's greatest work, or leave a huge deal to be desired. This top-notch 17 track collection of veteran country singer/songwriter Russell's finest story-songs rates as a real humdinger. The duets with golden-voiced singers Nanci Griffith, Katy Moffat, and Iris DeMont, the gentle ebb and flow of the exquisitely low-key arrangements, some tasty, twangy guitar, the neatly compact melodies, Russell's keen feel for touchingly plain-spoken lyrics and terse, yet telling minor details, the strikingly precise depictions of people and places both real and imagined, the guest vocals by Dave Alvin and chronically quirky favorite Jimmie Dale Gilmore, the often witty wordplay, the delicate home-spun poignancy evident in such cuts as "Veteran's Day" and "Big Water," Russell's wonderfully full-bodied baritone -- all are 100% smack dead on-the-money. A bright, beauteous, invaluable gem. - Joe Wawryzniak



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SMART WENT CRAZY

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SAVANT - Incubus (OXSO Records, POB 4377, River Edge NJ 07661-4377). A NJ band that sounds like they have their sound down to a science. The music is not really cliched, but nothing here expands the genre. Traces of old school metal mix freely with modern metal and the combination works. My favorite track is "Prayer" with the low-note bass intro; the vocals of Bruce Miller are on cue, and the riff, while leaning toward the simple side, is interesting. To these ears, "The Forbidden One" is the second best track. Overall, heavy grooves and worth listening to over and over again. - Paul Hanson

SAVE FERRIS - It Means Everything (Epic) This is one great ska band with an unbelievably talented horn section. One problem, female vocals, which I normally hate, but really don't mind with this one (probably cause she is so hot!). Now that ska is starting to be played on eMpTyV all the time, I could really see these guys getting big (like they are not already, they just toured w/Reel Big Fish). For all the rich kids, stick this one in your computer (it's an "Enhanced" CD ROM-type CD) and you can get to see just how stupid everyone in this band really is and stare at the singer for a few hours. If you're a fan of ska, go check this one out, you'll be skankin' within 15 seconds, I promise. - Conor Moore

SAVIOR SERVANT (Dominion Records, P.O. Box 286, Colonia, NJ 07067) Wow, it's been awhile since I heard a Hard Rock album that's worth keeping! Very melodic and heartfelt, 11 songs that each have their own mood and pace. It's a good variety without losing the focus point. - Phil Pinto

SCISSOR FIGHT - Guaranteed Kill (Wonder Drug Records, POB 995, Boston, MA 02123) Hardcore gone metal. Sometimes it just pays to listen to your gut instinct; for instance, after I heard the first song, I thought "bet it all sounds the same." Damn, I was right. The band's sludgcore sound and sense of humor are apparent on cuts such as "SuperVirgin vs. Death Machine" and "Build More Prisons." Their main redeeming quality is that they are pro-meat. Deathmetal: when will this shit just go away? - Tom Brebric

SCREECHING WEASEL - "Major Label Debut" EP (Lookout/Panic Button) Well, if you're a fan of Screeching Weasel but didn't like *Bark Like A Dog*, you are in for a real treat. SW have gone back to their roots with meaner lyrics (a song about how the internet sucks, and D.I.Y. posers, and why CD's suck) and faster guitars that remind me of *Boogada x3*. The best song on here is definitely "Racist Society;" it's good to finally hear SW sing about something else rather than girls. The band has some new band members (a new guitarist, bassist, and drummer, all from Squirtgun) but it still rocks, with all the background vocals that everybody loves and Ben's truly amazing voice. S.W. never fail to amaze me, every album keeps getting better and better. I love it. I have the feeling you're going to buy this or not buy this no matter what I say. But this one sure does rock, and if you like old Screeching Weasel, you're sure to love this. - Conor Moore

KEVIN SECONDS - Stoudamire (Cargo Music 4901-906 Morena Blvd. San Diego Ca. 92117-3432) How the mighty have fallen. Kevin Seconds will bore you to tears with his latest effort. This release is fourteen songs of horrid, ultra sweet pop that has no bite at all. Tracks like "Tiny Shelter", "Good Morning Hannah" and the title cut are all examples of a listless album comprised of repetitive music. I have no problem with someone cutting a pop record. However, pop music has to have feeling and levels in order for it to work. This record has neither. At one point Kevin sings a song "Won't Be boring". He could not have been more incorrect. It is not until the final song of the bunch, the slightly more energetic "Nowhere Ain't a Town", when Seconds wakes up rich in his sugary coma. However, by that point, it is too little, too late. - Rich Quinlan

SEMIIBEINGS - Three Pawns Standing (C/Z Records) The Semibeings pick up the torch of Frapp, Eno and (logically) Fear Of Music era Talking Heads. This is good original music. This is mature music. Your kid brother won't get this, but you might find your mom does, and it still won't be a bad thing. Semibeings have played the Knitting Factory, so if you get that avant-garde slightly-arty rock thing that goes on there, this is worth a listen to. However, overall this CD doesn't quite rise above. Well-recorded and thoughtfully written, none of the actual songs penetrate beyond their playing time. Maybe if I listened to it 15 or 20 times I might get it. But something tells me I won't do that with this record. Produced by Kramer, and one of his better efforts. Sounded great even on my crappy PC speakers. - Alex Saville

SHAKE APPEAL - You're Too Rich (Go Kart, PO Box 20, New York NY 10012) Bassist/lead singer Marcelo Romero (who's been popping up in Jersey Beat in different bands since he was in high school) and guitarist/co-vocalist Tom Beaujour dive headfirst into 13 power-pop nuggets with a sloppy, heartfelt *joie de vivre*. It's like these Lower East Side regulars are channeling the spirit of Stiv Bators playing Cheap Trick covers live at Budokan on the Goo Goo Dolls' old amps. Or something like that. Shake Appeal rocks, rolls, & will make you smile. Nuff said. - Jim T.

THE SHAZAM (Copper, 8208 Westpark, Ste. 104, Houston, TX 77063) Driving yet jangly power-pop, overall. "Blew it" is calmer, and very Beatles-esque, as are other songs to a lesser extent. A couple of the more up-tempo tunes reminded me a bit of Chicago local heroes the Smoking Popes. "Florida" is somewhat of a bluesy southern rock tune, and is therefore the weakest track on this otherwise pretty decent disc. - Paul Silver

SHELTER - Beyond Planet Earth (Roadrunner) After listening to this I was wondering what happened to Ray Cappo and how did he become such a pussy? If you like hardcore and Youth Of Today, don't buy this; if you like ska (yes, there is a ska song) and pop punk and have 10 dollars laying around and are drunk, you might want to pick this one up. Not too bad but nothing really original or special. - Conor Moore

I liked this a lot more than Conor. Despite your feelings about krishna, you'll find it hard to ignore the energy and high spirits that flow through much of this disc, not to mention the cotton-candy melodies and even a bit of self-deprecating humor.

- Jim T.

SHIFT - Get In (Columbia) In the wake of the oft-missed Quicksand comes the closest band I've heard so far (and I search, too). Vocally, Shift are a bit more poppy, but it fills the void. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SHOTWELL - Celery, Beef, And Iron (Mordam Records, P.O. Box 420998, S.F. CA 94142-0988) This guys are pretty damn rocking. Early Clash type feel that just makes you wanna dance up and down the halls at school with this blaring through a boombox while you get all the girls. A pretty original sound that's nice to see nowadays, go check this one out before it's sold out. - Conor Moore

SHPLANG - Self Made Monk (My Daily Creation, 1146 N. Central Ave. #356, Glendale CA 91202) Poppin' rhythms from our new favorite popstars - Shplang! The guitar can get a bit twangy, but overall the vibe is smooth and fuzzy. - Eva Silverman

SILENT MAJORITY - Life of a Spectator (Exit Records, PO Box 263 New York, NY 10012) Hardcore from Long Island making a national mark. Some of the most straightforward lyrics ever in a genre filled with plain-speaking folks. Silent Majority put together melodies and riffs that make their songs stand out from the typical go!-blur that is the generic stamp of so much hardcore. Sizzling and crisp, the Silent Majority come across with bell-like clarity, the singer hurling out his perceptions, thoughts and desires--songs



Shelter

Photo by Shawn Scallen

...and still more record reviews...

about love, alcoholism, music and sincerity. The band do a good job of bringing all kinds of sounds and techniques into their song writing while never losing that hardcore edge. Metal riffs, pop melodies and hip hop beats all show up in the songs here, but never once does Silent Majority sound like a crossover band, never once do they stop sounding like themselves. - Alex Saville

SILVER SCOOTER - *The Other Palm Springs* (Peek-A-Boo Industries, P.O. Box 49542, Austin TX 78765) Silver Scooter is a poppy band from Texas. They rock. Their songs almost have a tiny Britpop feel. Get the CD, you will NOT be disappointed. - Eva Silverman

SITTER - *Pastello* (Koch Records, 2 Tri-Harbor Ct., Port Washington, New York, 11050) Ranges from hip, spacey pop music, a la Stereolab, Spacemen 3, Spiritualized, etc. to tight post-punk/alternative rock. Lots of big guitar sounds and rocking rhythms. Parts of "Feel" kind of reminded me of classic Genesis at their best, while "Kind of Smile" was strongly reminiscent of older Shudder to Think. All of this points to the fact that, while the music on this disc isn't highly original and owes a lot to its influences, it is pretty good stuff, nonetheless. - Paul Silver

SIX GOING ON SEVEN - *Self-Made Mess* (Some Records, 405 W. 14th St. No. 3, New York, NY 10014) Very cool release that updates the emo sound with a slightly more accessible alternative style without compromising its integrity. The sound is very powerful, with a strong, mean bass sound that reminds one of a Steve Albini band at times. Every song on this disc is a gem. There's not a bad one in the bunch. The engineering is excellent, giving this disc a very clean, open, present sound that enhances the listening experience. The music itself contributes to that feeling of openness. It's a very spacious sound that's hard to describe in words, and must be heard to be appreciated. So that's what I recommend: that you listen to this disc. - Paul Silver

SIXTEEN DELUXE - *Emits Showers of Sparks* (Warner Bros.) Eleven highly atonal, soulless, and off-putting tracks of droning, grinding, tediously repetitive echo-rock blare. The hollow, tinny vocals are heavily echoed and reverbed to the point where the faintest trace of any recognizable human elements has been wholly eradicated. Add whining guitars, shallow metallic grooves, slower than a dead slug tempos, and no passion or emotion to speak of. The depressingly electronic, mechanical, by-the-numbers production is downright numbing in its disturbingly wholehearted embrace of elaborate studio wizardry at the expense of any much-needed warmth and plain old human feelings and vitality. If this glum, apathetic, and totally joyless swill is truly the next big futuristic thing, then I think I'll get myself a time machine so I go back into the past when music was clearly done by real-life warts-and-all people. - Joe Wawrzniak

SIXTEEN HORSEPOWER - *Low Estate* (A & M) Deeply moody and melancholy country-rock corks, mixing twangy, tremulous, sometimes yodeled vocals, stark arrangements (a banjo and violin occasionally compliment a stinging electric guitar), and pungently acidic, staring-into-the-abyss lyrics that unflinchingly address man's blackest, most upsetting foibles concerning sex, sin, lust and religion. The songs twist these concerns into a bleak, potent, flesh-crawling brew which alternates between fast, butt-kickin' explosions of pure wrenching anguish and slower, profoundly disturbing, almost dirge-like sonic meditations, both done with an acutely well realized intensity and grim, uncompromising honesty that's as unnerving as it is engrossing. A chillingly fine musical excursion into the dark night of the human soul. - Joe Wawrzniak

SKATALITES - *Foundation Ska* (Heartbeat, 1 Camp Street, Cambridge, MA 02140) Ska purists know the Skatalites, Ska newcomers should learn about the Skatalites. If it wasn't for them in 1964, we wouldn't be enjoying the Toasters in 1997. Highly recommended! - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SKAVOOVEE And The EPITONES - *Ripe* (Moon) Smoothed out Jazzy ska that tips their pork-pie hat towards the islands. You should spend your money here. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SKOIDATS - *The Times* (Moon) To see a bunch of skinheads walking towards you usually does not incite the phrase, "I bet these guys are fun"! I gotta tell ya, these guys are. The energy of the band just jumps out at you and they sing about my favorite pastime... beer. This has and will spend a lot of time in my CD player. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

EDDIE SKULLER - "Don't Tell Me" (PO Box 2407, New York NY 10108) A 5-song EP from NYC-based singer-songwriter Eddie Skuller in the post-Dylan/early-Springsteen street poet vein. The sinewy backup band keeps the music taut and highlights Skuller's evocative lyrics without overpowering the vocals. - Jim T.

SLACKER - *A Day In The Life Of...* (Mutant Pop) Northern Pennsylvania pop punk that sounds like an improved version of Big Drill Car. This was recorded at Sonic Iguana so you know the production is first rate. - Rick Spithoff

SLACKJAW - *A Sinking Ship Loves Company* (Figurehead Records, PO Box 9294, OR 97207) Bittersweet guitar pop without the excess sugar. Dysfunctional love is a recurring theme - just like real life. Finding humor in sadness is what these lads seek. It won't overpower you, but it's worth a spin. Don't forget to listen for the secret tracks. - Tom Brebric

SLO BURN - *Amusing The Amazing* (Malicious Vinyl, 6607 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles CA. 90028) Once upon a time, there was a band named Kyuss and they were enjoyed far and wide. Alas, for poor KYUSS have departed company, leaving lead singer John Garcia to form Slo Burn. Hark! Lo and behold. Slo Burn have continued in the same vein. For you, this means 70's hard-rock fat-bottomed groove-laden tuneage. If you like Slo Burn, go back and try Kyuss and vice versa. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SMART BROWN HANDBAG - *"Lullabies For Infidels"* (Stonegarden Records, 3101 Exposition Place, Los Angeles CA 90018) These guys must have thought that they'd hit a marketing bonanza when they came up with the band name "Smart Brown Handbag." Imagine wearing a T-shirt with that trademark emblazoned across the chest - you'd be lucky to get out of P.E. class alive. Nevertheless, SBH lay out some pretty classy songs on "Lullabies For Infidels", a vaguely Britpop-influenced collection of songs, sort of a cross between Robyn Hitchcock and Liam Gallagher. On songs like "I Forgot To Call" guitarist David Steinhart delivers some riffs sharp enough to shave a three-day growth, while the tasteful use of non-traditional instrumentation adds an ethereal dimension to several of the cuts. Smart Brown Handbag are an intelligent addition to modern alt-rock fare, "Lullabies For Infidels" a fine effort by any standards. - ReverendK

SMART WENT CRAZY-Con Art (Discord) Their second release on Discord, this is the first time I've had the pleasure of hearing these post-punk avant-garders. There is definitely a lot going on here, with unconventional instrumentation in the indie-rock format; some cello, the Farfisa as well as a sampler, piano and various percussion, as well as complex song structures, very choppy in places - not unlike a math-rock band, but with the soothing mellowness of chamber music. SWC is about stretching the limits of underground music, very much as Pere Ubu did in the mid and late 70's. Open your mind and SWC will grow on your brain like warm and fuzzy fungus. - Rick K.

SMASH MOUTH - *Fush Yu Mang* (Interscope Records, 10900 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 1230, Los Angeles CA 90024) What is punk these days, anyway? Hard-core, old school, pop-punk, ska-punk - who can tell any more? Although there's no hard and fast definition to the term, I sure know punk when I hear it, and Smash Mouth fits the bill. Sure, *Fush Yu Mang* throws the idea of a single genre out the window, Smash Mouth using a punk format to explore such musical ideas as seventies-styled jazz-funk ("Walkin' On The Sun"), ska-punk ("Padrino"), pop/rock ("Pet Names") and good old-fashioned punk (most of the rest of the disc). It's the attitude that counts, really, and whether you're judging *Fush Yu Mang* on its blistering guitar work, solid rhythms or pop-cult lyrical references to smokin' dope, teevee or the mob, the bottom line is this: labels be damned, you're going to have a great time listening to Smash Mouth. - Reverend K

SMOTHER (Deauville Productions 107 Deauville Dr. Mantoloking, NJ. 08738) Nice for a minute, then POW, hit in the face with some wonderful brutality. I really like how the songs are broken down into parts that show emotional tones. Songs may start with mellow contempt/anguish and then completely release an all out attack on the listener. Musically, Smother are a tight operation, and vocally well executed (shrieks, growls, etc). Live, they are known to cause a riot. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SNOT (Geffen) Kicking the proverbial corpse of politically correct Seattle music are Snot. They're loud, obnoxious and uncompromising. The lyrics represent things we would like to say, but can't: "I lie just to fuck you," "My

balls, your chin." There's even a little an ode to the man who probably passed on signing them (Brett G. Epitaph). Buy this and I may even respect your musical tastes. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

THE SNOT ROCKETS - Planet Head (Mackie Independent Artists, P.O. Box 111 Model City, NY 14107) Simple, sloppy, unapologetically stupid pop-punk music is the order of the day here, as this basic Toronto, Canada trio crank out 15 extremely rough and unrefined songs which all boast crunchy, no-frills arrangements, raw shouted vocals, dead-easy lyrics (on a few of the tracks said lyrics were actually made up on the spot, thereby giving the songs a scrappy, spontaneous quality which proves to be quite disarming), an engagingly loose, lunkheaded sensibility, and a very scruffy, bare-bones, unpolished sound which can best be described as subterranean basement quality noise. Overall, this album's utter lack of any slick, professional gloss is almost beyond crude, which is part and parcel of the group's clunky, cheesy no-brainer charm. Light and insubstantial for sure, but good, dumb fun all the same. - Joe Wawryzniak

THE SONORA PINE - II (Quarterstick Records, PO Box 25342, Chicago, IL 60625) Beautiful, quiet, somewhat melancholy music, featuring guitar, bass, drums, voice, and violin. Imagine crossing the subdued nature of The For Carnation with the Dirty Three's type of instrumentation, and then adding voice. Very nice. - Paul Silver

SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS - Plastic Seat Sweat (DGC) I cannot stress to everyone how much I love this band. They can write song after song about food - like "Dance For Me 4 Banana Puddin'" or "Love That Possum" - or any cliché from the hick backhills and I'm hooked. Rick Miller's twang guitar and croon are right on, as usual. Mary Huff and Dave Hartmann are the most solid bass/drums combo on the rockabilly swamprock planet. SCOT gives you humor, great hooks, & dance in your seat stuff from start to finish, along with the best instrumental surf music since Link Wray or Dick Dale. As always, this is a must-buy for music lovers of all ages. - Frank Phobia

SPACE COOKIE - Your CD Collection Still Sucks (Reservation Records, Box 7374, Athens, GA 30604) Fifteen songs originally released on four different 7-inches. All of the songs are of the basic punk variety. Some of the tunes have muffled vocals - annoying! "Guns, Butts And Glory" really stood out over the other songs. - Denis Sheehan

SPACESHITS - Winter Dance Party (Sympathy For The Record Industry) This is one awesome record. If the Devil Dogs played with the energy of Teengenerate they'd sound like the Spaceshits. In other words, this is fast paced garage punk with some '50's rock'n'roll influences. This debut by the Montreal band is a bit more lo-fi than I'd like, but it still gets my vote for best garage punk release of the year. - Rick Spithoff

SPARE CHANGE (PO Box 44, Pompton Lakes NJ 07442) I hate it when I hear a band that I can't easily pigeonhole; it takes away from my almighty critiquing powers. In the case of Spare Change, it's a good thing. I can say that their influences include funk, jazz, metal, punk and a little blues. Give them a listen if you are into the Chili Peppers. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SPREDHAUS - Home Is Where The Haus Is (No address) This fresh-faced quartet from New Brunswick parlay their funky blend of pop, blues, and soul into an irresistible combination thanks to the peppy vocal presence of Johanna Staley. She can belt a tune like a post-grunge Merman one minute and then get all soulful and sinuous the next. The band lays down a solid foundation of inventive alt-rock guitar chug and percolating rhythms that keep things grooving. - Jim T.

STANLEYBIRCH - Social Security (Sportboy Records, PO Box 6729, Paterson, NJ 07509-6729) Uninspired college rock. - Rick K.

STATE ROUTE 522 - Samson Is Apollo (Excursion, P.O. Box 20224, Seattle, WA 98102) If you are an indie rock puritan, this CD will fit your CD changer like a comfortable pair of shoes. Of course, if you are an indie rock purist then you probably don't own a CD changer, you little lo-fi devils. Anyway, most of the songs on this 4 song E.P. are pretty long. The whole CD runs about twenty five minutes. These guys rock a little harder than most indie rock stuff. It sounds like they found what that overdrive knob on their amps is used for. I liked some of the lyrics as well. They sound like they really mean something instead of just sounding cool. I'm interested to see what they'll do with a full length release. Good stuff. - Chris Duncan

STATICS - Punk Rock And Roll (Rip Off Records) This band offers up some superior R&B garage punk that falls somewhere between the Rip Offs and the Hi-Fives. This is another strong challenger for best record of the year in that genre. - Rick Spithoff

STINK - Splitting Nothing Up Three Ways (Allied Recordings, P.O. Box 460683 San Francisco, CA) Hardcore works best when it's executed with tremendous energy and has a clearly defined attitude at work within it. This hardcore album qualifies as a partial success. The attitude is certainly there -and it's a totally dead-on, pissed-off one at that: angry and confrontational, refusing to take anything at face value and questioning the validity of everything, the sensibility is both quite sincere and brutally incisive. However, the music itself sadly ain't up to snuff: it's sloppily arranged, sung in a hollow, toneless voice, with tinny sound, sketchy, drawn-out melodies, and a grave paucity of any serious insanely crankin', adrenaline-pumpin', nerve-rattlin' go-for-the-kill vivacity. The latter fault hurts most of all, making this album come across as very boring and unmemorable. While Stink sure don't smell like a rose, they aren't exactly rank either. Maybe these guys ought to get completely wired on black coffee for their next album; maybe then they'll have the necessary fast and furious fire required to record a really kick-ass hardcore album, instead of just an extremely tepid one. - Joe Wawryzniak

STRIFE - In This Defiance (Victory) I always feel guilty about listening to straightedge music, especially with a beer in my hand as I write this. There are several reasons why I like this: a) they're great, b) their style is a nice meld of 80's hardcore and 90's anger, c) they don't like me drinking beer (they're looking out for me). There are also a couple of reasons why I don't like this: a) they don't like me drinking beer, b) the intro and outro detract from a very good album. This is definitely one of the best hardcore bands out today. Now, go out and buy this, or I'll tell the band you're on drugs and have them beat you up! - Gary McGarvey Jr.

STUNTMAN - The American Fadeout (Mag Wheel Records, PO Box 115, Station R Montreal, Qbc CANADA H25 3K6) This fabulous dose of late Nineties indie rock comes from Scott Schmaljohn and John Polle, formerly of the Treepeople. What you have here is a steady batch of guitar-driven, honest-sounding rock that is neither overproduced commercial swill nor needlessly experimental sludge. Rather, Stuntman writes guitar songs that combine the finer points of both rock and pop, and are influenced by their Idaho setting. There is an honesty here which is undeniable, and you will sense it when the band truly hit its stride on tracks like "Weave to the Right", "Watch the Skeletons Dance" and "Gameface". The haunting instrumentation of "Esquimaux" that begins the record leaves you wondering where this thing will go, but Stuntman take you an extremely enjoyable journey. - Rich Quinlan

SUBARACHNOID SPACE - Almost Invisible (Release, P.O. Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551) Incredibly intense fuzz and distortion-laden psych instrumentals from this San Francisco trio. Chemically enhanced listeners might find themselves levitating around the house or clinging to their bongs in fear. Yes, it's very highly recommended. - Rob Thornton

SUBMISSIVES - An Anvil Will Wear Out Many A Hammer (Honest Don's) Three chord punk has become such an over-saturated world that if you are going to play it you need a gimmick to help you stand out. Enter the Submissives. These three lonely guys have dedicated an entire album to songs about S&M, female domination and of course, submission. This record is barely twenty minutes long and that is essential, for it is about nineteen minutes too much. The story lines wear thin far too quickly here, and you have heard this stuff musically about a billion times, as the band mixes generic three chord progression with Wretched Ones/Limecell type speed and growls, falling far short of even a decent imitation of those bands. While the idea here is fun, I was far from dominated by any of these fourteen tracks. - Rich Quinlan

SUBROSA - Never Bet the Devil Your Head (550 Music/Sony) It is amazing what can happen as people rally together after a tragedy. In 1995, the band For Squirrels suffered the untimely deaths of their singer, bassist and tour manager in a horrible accident while driving home from a gig. The surviving members, guitarist Travis Michael Tooke and drummer Jack Grieger, carried on, employed Andy Lord on bass and formed Subrosa. *Never Bet the Devil Your Head* is the fruit of their emotional and physical recovery, as this trio (with Tooke now assuming vocals) churns out thirteen tracks of occasionally blasting, sometimes atmospheric rock. "World's Greatest Lover", "Antigen Fiend," "Buzzard," and "Never the Best" all display abundant power and fury, while "Damn the Youth" and "Murder an Angel" show a more ethereal side. One constant is the intelligent, introspective lyrics. Considering their history, the band could have used this album as an outlet for personal frustration. Instead, they've written personal lyrics with universal appeal. The album hits its climax with "Madness is Genius by Design", a five minute powerhouse of a song which is the masterpiece of the disc. While the record fails to capture this kind of intensity and brilliance over the last three songs, Subrosa has created a body of work here that attempts to forge new ground for rock. - Rich Quinlan

SUPER HI-FIVE - *Strength Control Action* (Creep Records, Suite 220, 252 E. Market St., West Chester PA 19381) Hardcore with some punk, add in your favorite nap and you got Super Hi-Five. Reminds me of H2O but with out all the melodic choruses and cool-as-fuck breakdowns. No energy, no enthusiasm, and just overall a bad excuse for a CD. This one ain't bad, but it ain't nothing to go crazy over. - Conor M.

SUPERNOVICE - *Timely* (Onset Records, P.O. Box 1918, Garden Grove CA 92842) Emotion driven pop punk. Backed by three boys and a girl. One song, "Liverwurst" is an ultra-cute ska-punk song. I like the girl and boy mixed vocals, they carry the powerful and innocent tunes side by side. This band plunged into the heart of desire. - Eva Silverman

SUPERTONES - *Strike Back* (BEC Recordings, 810 3rd Ave. # 410-20, Seattle, WA 98104) Take one of the most upbeat styles of music (ska) and add "inspirational" Christian lyrics for that full conversion from Satan. I'm not one for the "born-again" crowd, but I will have to say that musically they are so good that I forgot I gave my first-born over to Jimmy Swaggart. Buy this if you are disenchanted with your own free existence! - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SURAN SONG IN STAG - *Shiny Objects* (4C Yorkshire Ct. Lakehurst NJ 08733) Just as Suran Song's lovely voice begins to lull you into a false sense of security, her impeccable band's slightly off-kilter rhythms and dissonant, quirky melodies begin to register. Then you listen to the lyrics and realize that all is not as it appears, as Suran's lilting voice starts mentioning how she'd love to be a Sadist with a Capital S and how you don't how to finish anything at work when you can just throw it away. These post-modern popsters, with their pop jangle and lilting tunes, don't just want you to smile and sway... they want you to smile and sway and *think*. As intelligent as it is beguiling, Suran Song In Stag's unique version of the modern alt-rock chick band makes pop music that's as subversive as it is seductive. - Jim T.

THE SUTRAS - *A Prize For Whitey* (POX Records, PO Box 4137, Ithaca NY 14850) The Sutras play lighthearted pop with enough indie quirkiness to make it fun and interesting. The twelve songs on *A Gift For Whitey* do not vary all that much, and at times become slightly redundant. When they speed things up a little, like on "Mom and Dad at Night", there is a more rock quality here, with vocals reminding me of a much younger and frustrated Gordon Gano - a bit of a whine, but you stay fixated on it. There is still a lot of this stuff floating around, and it reminds me of college radio staples from three or four years ago. Listening to the Sutras, you have a feeling that live, they would plug in and stare at the floor. The playing here is pristine sounding, but each track fails to gain a life of its own. Tracks like "Inertia", "2nd or 3rd", and "Dayscratch" are solid, lo-fi sounding pieces, but they just did not stir much in me. - Rich Quinlan

Unlike their granola eating neighbors in Ithaca, NY, The Sutras have forsaken the endless doodling of the "School Of Phish" with an emphasis on solid songwriting and pop hooks. I want to compare them to some of the great rock bands (especially Radiohead & early Pink Floyd) but I think that might be a bit misleading. You see, they are a great rock band but they have a sound that achieves these great rock moments using musical ideas rather than the dramatics that usually replace musicianship. Interesting chord progressions, powerful delivery, great musicianship and inspired lyrics have kept The Sutra's in my stereo more than one night this summer. - Mike Skinner

SWEET DIESEL - *Wrongville* (Gypsy Records/Velvet Records, 740 Broadway, New York, NY 10003) Quite an intense blend of heavy emo, garage punk, and the old school Chicago sound (think old Touch & Go and Albini influenced sounds), though none of these labels is an accurate representation of Sweet Diesel. This is a very cool disc, with plenty of buzzing, raging guitars, pounding drums, and gripping vocals. - Paul Silver

SWOON 23 - *The Legendary Ether Pony* (Tim/Kerr Records, PO Box 42423, Portland, OR 97242) Very spooky, mellow, ethereal music. Not gothic at all, not dark, but very sad sounding. The opener of this disc is very emotionless, reminding me very much of some of the stuff Lydia Lunch was doing back in the early 80s. Other songs are more melodic, and full of dreamy sadness, punctuated by bursts of sweet, smooth, fuzzy guitar. Very nice. - Paul Silver

SYMPOSIUM (Red Aunt Entertainment, 9720 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 400, Beverly Hills, CA 90212) Songs about love and riding bikes raced passed me with all of the energy of an eighteen year old all hyped up on Jolt cola. This five song EP is Brit-pop by a bunch of young'uns (most of them are only eighteen) who actually are British. Apparently from all of the press

they've gotten, they are also one of the best live bands in the old country. I guess these guys are possible heirs to the Oasis throne when it's time for them to be overthrown. With any luck, this should be any day now. - Chris Duncan

T-MODEL FORD - *Pee-Wee Get My Gun* (Fat Possum/Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset, CA 90026) Stemming from the harsh, impoverished state of Mississippi, 75-year-old ex-con and former chain gang member T-Model Ford, who once did time in the joint for murder, definitely has somethin' to say about how much of a bitch life can sure be -- and its all pure bad news concerning women, relationships, life's endless hardships, and other such rough-road-to-hoe kinda stuff. This beat-up old geezer's raspy, worn-out, weathered moan of a voice, accompanied by raw, simple, very no-frills and almost brutally unadorned blues music arrangements, doesn't bother with any fancy phrasing, cutting through and into the guts of every song with a fabulously fierce straightforwardness. Favorite track: the hilariously profane "I'm Insane," in which T-Model howls and yowls about kicking his girlfriend's ass because she's been cheating on him. Crude for sure, but it does the trick with a certain extremely basic, but hugely effective directness. - Joe Wawryzniak

TAPPING THE VEIN (Darkmark Management, 129 Fayette St. Conshohocken, PA 19428) Goth groove dance music. They don't seem to actually be junkies, but then, these days it's hard to tell. Maybe it's a reference to bloodletting. All that aside, the first track comes across as strong as many a great club hit. Singer Heather Thompson has a set of lungs on her that could tear the skin right off your face even if you're at the back of the bar. However, much of the musical sounds here are stuck in the 80s--more like Tapping the Collapsed Vein. The opening riff in "Broken" is



Suran Song In Stag

so close to Sisters of Mercy's "Dominion" I can smell the ink drying on the lawsuit. This is the end of the millennium guys, if you want to be extreme you better really go for it. Try a bigger needle and some childhood regression therapy to bring up all those repressed abuse memories. - Alex Saville

TEEN IDOLS - (Honest Don's, P.O. Box 192027, San Francisco CA 94119-2027) Ramonsey straight up punk rock that does just that -- rocks! This one's produced by Ben Weasel so you know it's good. Power pop punk with energy and melodies to keep you singing along the whole time. If you like the Ramones or the punk/pop/punk sound, go pick this up; and if you don't, pick it up anyway. - Conor Moore

TESTAMENT - *Demonic* (Mayhem/Fierce) The title speaks for itself They're back, they're loud, and above all they're fuckin' pissed off. Chuck Billy's vocals have gone straight to the pits; what I mean is - total death metal! And he's not alone, the rest of the band (which includes a brand new line-up except for former rhythm guitarist, now lead, Eric Peterson) is right behind him going ballistic on 11 brand new tracks. The 1st single is "John Doe", which is the only one that's not so brutal. But songs like "Demonic Refusal", "Hatred's Rise", and "Murky Waters" make up for it perfectly. Definitely a must-have for any listener of heavy brutal shit. - Phil Pinto

TEXAS TERRI & THE STIFF ONES - *More Worms* (PO Box 3478,

Hollywood, CA. 90078) This is the only woman "man" enough to make G.G. Allin take voluntary baths (if he weren't dead in his own feces). Terri ranks up there with some of the toughest women in music (you know who they are). Southern fried punk rock circa 1978. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

THIS BOY'S LIFE - *Riff Raff In The Basement* (J-Bird Records) - Very energetic and totally fucking rocking. Lively pop punk with the vocals sounding more punk. These guys will rock your world and then some. This is their first CD and I have an erection waiting for the next one. Pop punk and punk fans alike will be pleased alike, so go pick this one up. - Conor Moore

THE THUGGS (VML Records, Box 183, Franklin Park IL. 60131) Probably the best garage punk rock I've heard in a long time. Loud, fast paced punk with a touch of (intentional?) sloppiness. The music on this disc sounds as if the band is playing live in your house. Although the entire disc is loaded with great songs, "Listen Up," "I Wanna Be A Rock Star," and "Light Bulb" are very cool. The lead vocals have an uncanny resemblance to Ron Emory on early TSOL songs. For three guys, they sure make a lot of noise. Produced by Joey Vindictive. Buy this disc and visit www.vml.com for a FUN time. - Denis Sheehan

THE TIKI TONES - *Suburban Savage* (Dionysus) Sixties Surf Sounds intermingle with Hawaiian and go-go music. No vocals to be found anywhere. Cool hip sounds great for sipping tall drinks with umbrellas in them. This would mesh well in places that are catering to the lounge music revival by spicing it up a bit. - Tom B.

TIPSY - *Trip Tease* (Asphodel, PO Box 51, Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113) The ultimate in twisted lounge music. Take samples from the cheesiest lounge music you can find, and then meld them together to form something new. Stock, Hausen, and Walkman did something similar with their "Organ Transplants" CD, but I think this attempt is a little more successful. The samples blend together really well, and there's more variety in the music. The party music of the late 90s for the cocktail generation! - Paul Silver

TODAY IS THE DAY - *Temple Of The Morning Star* (Relapse Records, PO Box 251, Millersville PA 17551) Steve Austin is a very disturbed man. If you need any proof of this statement, check out the material on the latest TITD release, *Temple Of The Morning Star*, from those sick, twisted freaks at Relapse. This is a nightmare put on tape...relentless screaming, bizarre samples and monstrous drumming comprise the 17 songs on this disc, whose title was inspired by a Satanic church in Denver. Songs like "The Man Who Loved to Hurt Himself", "Crutch", and "Satan Is Alive" should give you an insight into where this band is coming from. This is similar to AmRep style noise, not quite metal, not quite hardcore. It is more like a combination of the most evil components of both, blended together with the sole purpose of burying itself into your brain. As wild as the guitar work, as searing as the vocals, it is the drumming that truly staggered me. Brad Elrod holds this band together, allowing Austin and Scott Weston to explore the dark recesses of their minds. In the end, *Temple* is a hurricane of noise and musical confusion, sometimes electrifying, sometimes horrific, but always interesting. - Rich Quinlan

TOE NUT - *Two In The Piñata* (Mute Records, 140 West 22nd Street, #10A, New York NY 10011) In the three-ring circus that is rock & roll there's room for all kinds of artists under the big tent. There are some, however, that prefer to work comfortably in the sideshow. I suspect that Atlanta's Toe Nut is one such outfit. It isn't so much that *Two In The Piñata* is strange - the town that Sherman burned to the ground has survived Daryl Rhodes and Col. Bruce Hampton - it's just that the album is, well, downright maddening. Just when you think you've gotten the band figured out, all sweetness and melody and all that, they go and throw a spanner in the works by working out some inspired cacophonous musical twist that spirals headfirst into an avant-garde territory where rockers fear to tread. *Two In The Piñata* is an exercise in contradiction: at times, the songs are quite traditional, with beautiful vocals and straight-forward musical accompaniment. In other instances, however, the vocals fly into a Yoko Onoish wail with the instrumentation sojourning to an inner/outer space that would make Sun Ra blush. It's invigorating but also confusing - enter *Two In The Piñata* at your own risk, and leave your preconceived notions at home. - Reverend K

TORTURE KITTY - *Yardsale* (V.M.L. Records, PO Box 183, Franklin Park IL 60131) Well, kids, here you are, more power pop punk. What can be said about this kind of stuff? The songs are bouncy, the riffs are catchy, the singer has a crystal clear and smooth delivery. This is harmless, kinda fun if you are in the mood, but nothing memorable. "Job Corps Girl" and "Problem with Me" were the two tracks that stood out for me, for they were all the things I mentioned above, plus displayed a good sense of humor. However, songs like "Keep On Smiling" were just over the top. "Teen Idol"

was my favorite of the bunch, for it had an almost doo-wop feel about it, while maintaining punk aggressiveness. Unfortunately, the majority of the songs here have a cookie-cutter style about them, making most efforts hard to distinguish from one another. V.M.L. usually releases this kind of stuff, only with more originality and spirit. Torture Kitty has these qualities are far too few tracks here. Worth getting if you find it at a, ahem, yardsal. - Rich Quinlan

TOY DOLLS - *One More Megabyte* (Rotten Records P.O. Box 2157 Montclair CA 91763) Already eighteen years in existence, the Toy Dolls have an incredibly attractive and strong style. Armed with British accents, their version of punk rock has brought them fame throughout the world. Inspired by Chuck Berry, they remind me a bit like 70's bad boys Sham 69, but without the fuzz. - Eva Silverman

TRANSISTER (Interscope) Eleven edgy, melodic pop tunes. All of the songs are depressingly slow and include different odd sounds and samples - the best being a scream from some old horror movie. Keely Hawkes (women) vocals are so soft and some times very sexy sounding. A lot of the vocal tracks are doubled over giving it The Indigo Girls sound. - Denis Sheehan

TRAVIS - *Good Feeling* (Independiente, 225 Lafayette St. #1206, NYC 10012) Bland tunes lacking convincing lyrics and powerful vocals, as well as strong rhythms. - Eva Silverman

TREADMILL TRACKSTAR - *Only This* (Breaking Records/Atlantic) Beautifully brooding grassroots pop-rock, done with real bravura, singularly moody style by a most distinctive and compelling Columbia, South Carolina quartet. Angelo Gianni's raspy vocals and very downbeat, melancholic, but engrossingly odd point of view immediately grab the listener's attention; the lovely, shimmering, delicately wrought arrangements, neatly ringing acoustic guitar work, Katie Hamilton's resonant, resplendent cello playing, the swirling melodies, and an arresting air of bittersweet anguish do a superb, unerring job of sustaining that attention. Harmonious and heart-breaking in comparable measure, this exquisitely tormented debut album delivers the poignantly reflective, feeling really sad goods with artful, deeply affecting frequency. - Joe Wawrzyniak

TRIPLE FAST ACTION - *Cattlemen Don't* (Deep Elm Records, PO Box 1965, New York NY 10156) Triple Fast action is living proof that there is still nothing as invigorating as hook-filled rock played with passion. TFA constructs one harmony-laden cut after another filled with riffs that would make Rick Nielsen from Cheap Trick green with envy. If you want a reference point for this band, think *Dream Police*-era Cheap Trick with the occasional ethereal, plush pop tones of the Dandy Warhols. There are elements of gritty guitar punch as well as head-space quietness, as hard rock and pristine pop slam into each other and obviously like the feeling. The band changes tempos and volume with unearthly easiness, as evidenced on "Duck and Run", "Cattlemen Don't" and "No Doubt". I was particularly impressed with the subtle tranquility of "Sent Them Straight", whose horn section seems like a natural progression rather than a departure from the norm. Wes Kidd's vocals carry the record, sometimes in the form of a content, harmonious delivery, or a angered, ripping rage. *Cattlemen Don't* is radio-friendly without sacrificing integrity. I loved this from beginning to end. This is record that helps you remember why you love rock n' roll. - Rich Quinlan

TRISTAN PSIONIC - *TPA Flight 028* (Sonic Unyon Records, PO Box 57347 Jackson Station, Hamilton, Ont., L8p 4x2., jerks@sonicunyon.com.) This Canadian quartet plays herky-jerky indie guitar rock with lots of cool fuzzy melodies in all the right spots. Fans of Polvo and Treepeople take note. - Rick K.

TRUMANS WATER - *Action Ornaments* (Runt, P.O. Box 2947, San Francisco, CA 94126) A pleasant return to form by these indie rock vets, who seemingly vanished after one of their members left to found the indie/Christlove band Soul Junk. The band, which is now based in Portland, continues to churn out jittery angular songs which jump from riff to riff with the greatest of ease. An enjoyable listen. - Rob Thornton

TSUNAMI - *A Brilliant Mistake* (Simple Machines, PO Box 10290, Arlington, VA 22210-1290) Thank god, they're back! After a couple of years of silence since their last release, Tsunami are back with another album chock full of clean, crisp pop gems. And it's their best yet, in my opinion. Biting, intelligent lyrics, great hooks, beautifully sung vocals, and a bunch of friends joining in on the arrangements add up to a true winner. - Paul Silver

TUNNEL RATS - *Our War Is Never Over* (Baloney Shrapnel, PO Box 6504, Phoenix AZ 85005) This is a collection of new stuff, the band's last two 7

inches, compilation tracks, and a lot of covers (G.G. Allin, Redd Kross, Black Sabbath.) As far as I know, the Tunnel Rats are the only Northerners to be admitted to the American hardcore phenomenon known as the Confederacy Of Scum (Anti Seen, Cocknoose, etc.) As with the other Confederacy acts, the Rats' music is fast, brutal, and simple. The lyrics are likewise. Any Queers fans who pick this up because B-Face and Wimpy appear will be sorely disappointed, but songs with titles like "Fuck That Weak Shit," "Fuck This Shit," and "Rollins Is A Gay Boy" should have given them some clue. The blood flies, and the band plays hard. - Johnny Puke

TURMOIL - *Anchor* (Century Media Records, 1453-A 14th St. #324, Santa Monica CA 90404) Turmoil play vicious, aggressive hardcore in the same style as Integrity, Earth Crisis and One King Down. This is not for the timid. This particular release is an overview of the bands' career and progression thus far. The 14 song disc features previously unavailable material, four new studio tracks, as well as songs from their "Who Says Time Heals All Wounds" EP released in 1994. This is a sound that is becoming incredibly popular of late, and because of that, you have heard this all before. The drumming stands out as the driving force here, being used as the backbone of a relentless attack featuring pained, screamed vocals. The band lives a straight-edge lifestyle, but does not use that as a focus of their lyrics, instead writing deeply personal and emotional songs like "Monolith", "The "Truth" and "Loss For Words". These tracks were my personal favorites and come on the latter half of the release. The disc started slowly for me, but the growth of the band is obvious by the time you finish listening. In a world becoming full of this, Turmoil is impressive. *Anchor* finishes very strong and made me long to see them live. - Rich Quinlan

TWEEZER - *How To Live In A Day Of Moral Chaos* (Shoestring, PO Box 8952, Atlanta GA 31106) Listening to this CD gives me a sore throat. Lead screamer Timmy Smith belts out these songs in a Rollins-esque fashion while not quite imitating him. I can't say I like this, although the music does rock, metamorphosing from AmRep style noise rock to sludgy grooviness (like Seattle grunge) to Jon Spencer-like weirdness. This band is not going to put Atlanta on the alt/punk/hardcore map (but then again, has there ever been a great band from there?) but if you're into noisy stuff like AmRep and Trance bands, you might want to check this out. - Scott Eastman

TWENTY MILES - *R.L. Boyce Othar Turner Fife & Drum Spam* (Fat Possum/Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset, CA 90026) The blues at its most raw, ragged, and wrenching receives a suitably rough, lowdown, stripped-to-the-bare-essentials stomp-ass treatment by this dynamite New York City-based (!) lonesome twosome in one wickedly dead-on live recording. Earthy, anguished, and, for all its potent crudity, extremely affecting, the song titles alone testify to the album's splendidly scrappy glory: "Junkyard," "Place Called Hell," "I'm Not a Man," and the especially smokin' "Mississippi Bolero." So, the next time you feel bummed and you're itchin' to get wasted on some lethal rotgut whiskey, by all means play this honey; it's the perfect platter to get plastered to. Accolades don't come any better than that. - Joe Wawryzniak

TWISTED NIXON - *In Punk We Trust* (Watergate, 42145 Lyndie Lane #200, Temecula, CA 92591) Listening to Twisted Nixon reminded me of bad metal bands like Ugly Kid Joe - one joke played out for just far too long. Sure, this stuff is quick and easy to sing along to, but it sounds like a punk rock parody. The vocals of Johnny Punish slip all too often into a bad Johnny Rotten impression, particularly on "The Blame Game", in which Punish desperately searches for a snarl. Their political statements are neither vicious nor sarcastic enough to be funny, so they fall horribly flat. I was also offended by the butchering of Buddy Holly's "Oh Boy" and The Beatles "I Wanna Hold Your Hand;" both of these versions were so horrid, I'm amazed the band allowed them to be released to the public. These are songs their best friends couldn't stand to listen to. The final embarrassment comes with the closing track, "Kissinger is Dead" (taken from a live performance,) in which Twisted Nixon comes off like a bad fraternity band. I cannot believe someone sent money on this. - Rich Quinlan

ULTRABREAKFAST - *Ice Cream Tricycle* (Catapult Records, 215 A Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02210) Cool indie pop, with more fuzzy guitar and less jangle. Nice laid back songs, too. Don't know what more to add, since there wasn't anything to differentiate it from other bands, other than it was



The Van Pelt

better than the average fuzzy guitar indie pop band. - Paul Silver

THE UNDEAD - *Dawn Of The Dead* (Shock Records, P.O. Box 22098, San Francisco CA 94122) This is Bobby Steele's band who was a former member of the Misfits about 15 years ago. When he got the old boot, he formed this band and this is like their greatest hits or something. It definitely has a Misfit type feel with the same sorta lyrics; but without Danzig, it just ain't no good trying to be a Misfits rip off band. - Conor Moore (Note to Bobby Steele - Please direct all letters and phone calls to Conor Moore. The opinions of our writers do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of the management.)

UP FRONT - *Movement* (IJT Records PO Box 20300 Tompkins Square Station NYC 10009) This is classic hardcore brought to you by these straight-edge veterans. The band crushes you with song after song of high energy, raging hardcore that will leave you breathless. Each track is a precise nugget of malicious intensity combined with classic sing along stomps. "Balisage", "Meat To Please You", "Matter" and "How Flies Get Fat" are just a handful of the cuts that would fall under the mandatory listening category. Steven Keeley's in your face vocals are backed up by air tight playing from guitarists Jon Field and Rich Ryder. Pay attention to the amazing work provided by bassist Jeff Terranova (who also aided as an executive producer) and drummer Tim Schmoeyer. Each member has his individual role mastered which creates both a heavy and fluid sounding record. Movement is destined to be a contemporary hardcore classic, capturing a sound that so many bands want, but cannot achieve. - Rich Quinlan

URANIUM 9-VOLT - *Wild Seven* (Lookout) I honestly wasn't very impressed with the first couple of songs on this six song EP (although later they did grow on me a little more) They pretty much sounded like any other punk band. But, around the third song or so, when my Fugazi buzzer went off (but in a good way), things started to get interesting. I like them a lot more when they are stretching out their punk arms and grabbing that emo-core ring, which they do for most of this EP. - Chris Duncan

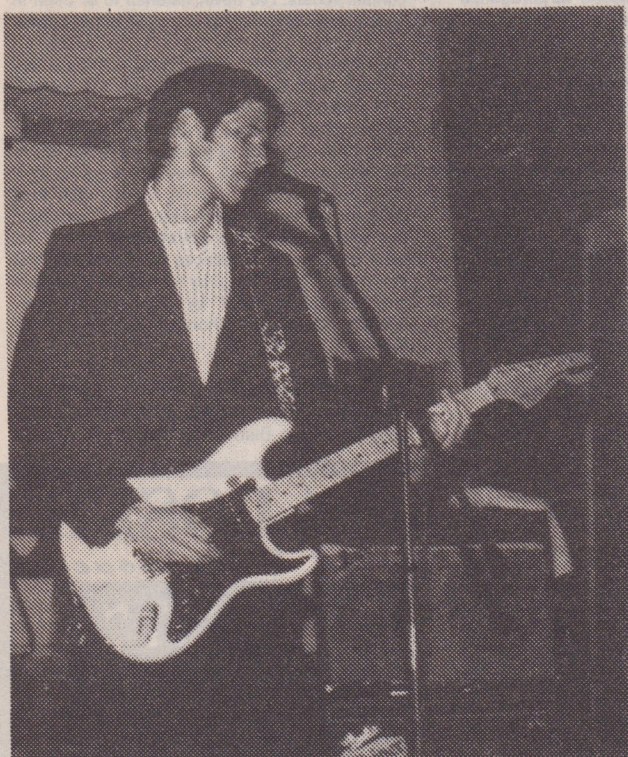
U.S. BOMBS - *Warbirth* (Hellcat/Epitaph) I suppose anything is better than Total Chaos, but this is just so Clash-derivative that it's really hard to get past. You'll find yourself saying "this singer better be English or I'll slap that fake accent right out of this mouth." The production is awesome and I suppose if you dig Rancid, Swingin' Utters, or any of the authentic British '77 stuff, then you might dig this. This music is simple and straightforward but clear and catchy, but that singer... Ugh! - Johnny Puke

THE VAN PELT - EP (Art Monk Construction, PO Box 6332, Falls Church VA 22040) How much can you learn about a band in just over seven minutes? If you're talking about the Van Pelt, you can learn a lot. You will come to the realization that this is one of the most unique and quirky bands out there. None of the three songs are similar at all with "the speeding

train" featuring ethereal guitar work and spoken vocals. "Evil High" is nothing more than a fifty-seven second long cheer. The most straightforward of the three efforts is "The Democratic Teacher's Union". Maybe it's me, but I loved this. If you are the adventurous type, try it. - Rich Quinlan

VAPIDS - Drink Beer (Crack Records) George Tabb endorsed this Toronto area band, so that tells you right away that they've got Ramones written all over them. On their better tunes, usually the faster songs such as "I Can't Remember", "Weekend Desperado" and "I Don't Wanna Work", they do the Ramones thing about as well as The Riverdales. This is a good consistent release with 20 songs clocking in at over 40 minutes, but this could have been awesome if they had only maintained a higher level of energy on about half of the songs. - Rick Spithoff

VIEWMASTER - Laugh Lines (Popfactory, 21 Noel Drive, Ossining, NY 10562) Hoboken drummer Lyle Hysen has been a steady presence on the



Viewmaster

local club scene since the early Eighties, first as a teenaged punk rocker and then via his long-lived pre-grunge rock band, Das Damen. These days, Hysen is all grown up but still laying down a reliably solid beat in Viewmaster, a richly talented trio which seems doomed to remain one of the Mile Square City's best-kept secrets. While the band's debut CD benefits from Hysen's steady hand behind the drumkit, the album is really a showcase for the emotionally wrought vocals and explosive guitar of singer/songwriter Jim Scheiner. Like Hoboken's better-known Yo La Tengo, Viewmaster's songs carom from bitter, introspective whispers to full-blown sonic screams. But whereas Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan rarely lowers the bulletproof shield of ironic distance he erects in his songwriting, Scheiner's lyrics unflinchingly expose his heart and soul, whether he's reliving the devastating pain of divorce or coping with the dreary everyday realities of the workplace. This is a gritty, powerful, emotionally satisfying, and sonically adventurous album that deserves far more attention than it's received. - Jim T.

VIGILANTES OF LOVE - Slow Dark Train (Capricorn Records, 2205 State Street Nashville, TN 37203) Get ready for a harrowingly up-front and uncompromising spiritual journey into the intense ultimate in gut-wrenching angst -- vulnerability, despair, hopelessness, doubt, fear, hell, just about every last deeply unnerving emotion imaginable gets a chance to rear its ugly head and state its grim case in frightfully lucid terms -- which delivers one potent cut after another. Backed up by fiercely burning and churning

rawer-than-freshly-killed-meat minimalist rock music, Bill Mallonee's brutally clear-eyed meditations on religion, faith, sex, self-awareness, and other such profound topics illustrates with bracing conviction that personal enlightenment is rarely an easy thing to pull off. What this extraordinary bare-bones Athens, Georgia threesome achieves with this album constitutes as a true marvel: The darkness before the dawn is indeed very dark and terrifying -- and the illuminating light of the dawn, although by no means simple to view, is still a truly glorious sight to behold. A breathtaking accomplishment. - Joe Wawryzniak

VKTMS (Broken Rekids, P.O. Box 460402, SF, CA 94146-0402) Let's see, the VKTMS started playing punk rock 19 yrs ago in San Francisco. That would have made me about seven years old when they started out and some of you probably weren't even born yet. This is their first CD after releasing everything up until now exclusively on vinyl. This CD is 24 songs of straight-ahead punk rock blitz with female vocals. However there are a lot more variations here than in most old school stuff. Some of the live stuff is pretty cool too. Like San Francisco Nights, which is a great rag on hippiedom. - Chris Duncan

THE VO5 (2639 Woodacres Rd., Atlanta GA 30345) If you like early Eighties New Wave, you'll love these Georgian power-popsters. Kendall Keeling's vocals bounce along like Katrina & The Waves on Lithium, the rockabilly twang on the guitars recalls Billy Zoom's marvelous work in X, and the cheesy synthesizers sound like special effects from a 50's sci fi flick. So retro it sounds new. - Jim T.

VOODOO GLOW SKULLS - Baile De Los Locos (Epitaph) Although ska-punk is a very cool thing, I would like to say that for me, VGS go just fast enough to make the horns sound unnecessary. Still worth your money. -Gary McGarvey Jr.

WALKER - Actually Being Lonely....Isn't All That Bad (Harmless) Another Chicago band that plays high quality happy pop punk with a cool guitar sound that has a moody edge that's usually associated with emo-ish bands like Garden Variety. Zoinks! fans would dig this. - Rick Spithoff

WANDERING STARS (Nuf Sed) Handsome-sounding country music created by fanatical disciples of the '50s "countryopolitan" sound. However, most of the tunes tend to rely on old county cliches, and the singer's melodramatic tenor defeats his valiant efforts to sing about those traditional "hard times" a la old-style country. - Rob Thornton

WARZONE - Fight For Justice (Victory) Holy fucking shit, this is the best I've heard from Warzone ever. Warzone is the definition of hardcore, plain and simple. Even though Raybeez died recently, his spirit will live on forever in the hardcore scene and boy did he leave us with one hell of a present. I've been up for the past 4 days because I just can't seem to stop listening to this. This is album of the year, no doubt at all. If you haven't heard Warzone by now, go get this one NOW (if you can find it)! Warzone have always been the best hardcore band and always will, I just can't get enough of these guys. It's just a shame nobody will be able to hear these songs live. If you are into the hardcore scene at all and you don't have this, just get poseur tattooed to your forehead now. - Conor Moore

WESTON - Music From The Soundtrack Matinee (Go-Kart Records, P.O. Box 20, Prince St. Station, New York NY 10012) Well, Weston are back with 11 new songs and a brand new bassist. Weston have kept their pop punk sound with songs about girls and heartbreak. This is definitely not their best release but that does not mean you should not pick it up, cause it's still got some damn good songs that'll have ya singing along in about half the time it took for you to get your I Love Weston tattoo! It ain't the best, but it's still rocking. - Conor Moore

WHATEVER - Youngsters (Dr. Strange, PO Box 7000-117, Alta Loma CA 91701) Social Distortion-influenced Calipunk from this Cleveland 4-piece. As with all of the Dr. Strange releases, the production is great, the package is slick, and the band is tight. - Johnny Puke

WHIRLPOOL - Liquid Glass (Revelation) Revelation, home of some of today's finer emo-core, puts out another offering for you. The music is well crafted and the male/female dual vocals are a nice change of pace but, Whirlpool just aren't catchy. The best song is called "Wasteland" (it's their catchy one) which can also be found on the Revelation compilation *Insight Program*, so buy that instead. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

WHISKEYTOWN - Strangers Almanac (Outpost Recordings, 8932 Keith Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90069) Thankfully avoiding the overly slick and soulless MOR sensibility of contemporary commercial country music, this pleasingly no-frills Austin, Texas quintet instead opts for a more refreshing and satisfyingly spare, soulful, and quietly heart-breaking mentality that's

firmly immersed in the classic "crying into your beer glass on a lousy, lonely Saturday night" country music vein of yore, with a healthy dollop of down-home soul and raw, nakedly open emotion tossed in to stop things from becoming too unbearably melancholic. Slow, dolorous, and wistfully contemplative, with a fragile, pretty, gently melodic sound, sparse, restrained arrangements (the organ, piano, and violin are just gorgeous -- and the pedal steel guitar on "16 Days" makes for some extremely delicious ear candy, too), beautifully anguished vocals, and moist-eyed, down-in-the-dumps lyrics which cut deep without ever being too mushy about it, *Strangers Almanac* rates as a most touching and hauntingly sad album. -Joe Wawrzniak

DANNY WHITE -*Is This All* (Speak True Records, 170 East 78th St. Ste. 10, NYC 10021-2080) I caught this guy at a coffee house in Belmar with just Danny and his Gee-tar. I liked him enough to buy his CD and do a review (even though bigger area fish have already done so). Hearing him solo showcased his lyric writing skill; having the band behind him on disc gives him the full-bodied sound to make it all the

better. White reminds me of other area bands, like Springsteen during his fun days (the early stuff) with some Southside Johnny throw in. With or without the backing band, he'll do good things. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

WILL HAVEN - *el Diablo* (Crisis Records, P.O. Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232) Rock music with a righteously pissed-off social conscience ain't exactly in vogue in this sickeningly sanitized, play-it-safe-and-don't-say-anything-that-might-offend decade, so this Sacramento, California hardcore outfit's angrily outspoken blast of sheer moral outrage qualifies as a refreshing, albeit unsettling change of pace which courageously goes against the hideously wimpoid politically correct grain. Addressing such highly troublesome issues as arrogance run grossly amuck, gratuitous handgun violence, unhappy couples caught in abusive relationships, vehement self-loathing, and alcoholism, these extremely infuriated guys rip into the guts of each and every cut with shocking ferocity. The monstrous, howling vocals and fiercely surging, burning'n'churning arrangements hammer the downbeat messages home with jolting potency. Gritty, embittered, and un-

commonly blessed with a brutally bright, fearless, dedicated commitment to telling it like it truly is, *el Diablo* not only gets under the listener's skin and stays there for an uncomfortably long while, but also gives you plenty of grim, unpleasant, but bountiful and provocative food for thought to chew on. - Joe Wawrzniak

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS - *White Women* (Shoe String, PO Box 8952, Atlanta, GA 31106) Jazz, jazz, and more jazz. Although there are a few great, relaxing, slow songs, most of the songs are what can be best described as hardcore jazz. Saxophones, guitars, heavy bass, and piano all come powerfully together to knock your socks off. The first cut "As The Hen Ages" is pure insanity. Only three of the twelve songs contain vocals. I've never listened to or been in to jazz, but I did love this disc. - Denis Sheehan

WORKING STIFFS - *Dog Tired* LP (East Bay Menace, PO Box 3313, Oakland, CA 94609) The sound is 70s UK punk played by CA blue collar mokes, and they do a damn good job of it. From their shit jobs to getting shit faced, off to the punk show they go. They look back on their childhood in 1974 and on friends who took different paths on "New Man:" "He had conquered pain, I saw the victory in his veins." It's easy to spot the influences by the bands that they cover: "New Song" by the Cockney Rejects and "Borstal Breakout" by Sham 69. An awesome piece of vinyl (honest vinyl, not a CD, Yeah!!) - Tom Brebich

WORLD/INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY - *The True Story Of The Bridgewater Astral League* (Gern Blandsten) Holy shit! This is

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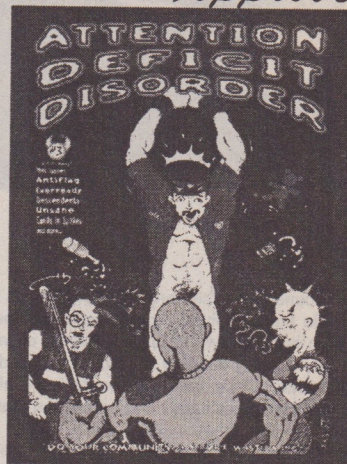
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incredible! A free-jazz ska industrial pop musical soundtrack! This disc certainly qualifies as one of the most unique and original releases of 1997, and as such will certainly not bore. Forget everything you ever thought music was supposed to be and listen to this! Highly recommended! - Paul Silver

WORMHOLE - *Writing On The Wall..* (Forty-Two Records, PO Box 983 Levittown PA 19058) What the fuck is up with PA and pop-punk? It like in the last three years or so every other three-chord pop-punk band hails from the Keystone State. Thanks a lot, Weston! Seriously though, if you haven't tired from the endless flood of Green Day and Queens clones, pick this CD up. - Rick K.

STEVE WYNN - *Sweetness And Light* (Zero Hour Records, 14 West 23rd Street, 4th Floor, New York NY 10010) Former Dream Syndicate frontman and accomplished solo artist Steve Wynn is one of those true "legends in his own time," a talented and highly influential songwriter and musician who nonetheless can't get arrested on Main Street, U.S.A. The dichotomy of Wynn's status as a legendary unknown has done little to affect his artistic output, though, *Sweetness And Light* a solid collection of classic pop/rock and psychedelica and a strong showcase for Wynn's clever lyrical abilities and distinctive guitar style. Few artists working in a similar genre today bring with them Wynn's knowledge or experience, with influences as diverse as Bob Dylan, sixties garage bands, nineties alt-rock and the ever-present Velvet Underground incorporated into cuts like "Silver Lining," "Ghosts" or the cheerfully insane title cut. Any day now Wynn is going to strike the chord that will bring him mainstream adoration - but don't wait, check this talented artist out now. - Reverend K

THE YUM YUMS - *Sweet as Candy* (1+2 Records, Clean Nishi-shinjuku Bldg 1F, Nishi-shinjuku 7-5-6, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 160 Japan) A pop-punk band from Norway on a record label out of Japan. Hmm. It's a strange concept that works surprisingly well. The Yum Yums play fast, bouncy pop music that delivers just what the title says. The Ramones influence is pretty obvious in some of the songs, as it usually is in pop-punk bands. A surprising treat. - Paul Silver

ZEN LUNATIC - *Disco Insurance* (Juggernaut Records, 344 Tappan St. Brookline MA 02146) Like Too Much Joy, Zen Lunatic specialize in light, catchy pop tunes with frivolous lyrics. Unlike Too Much Joy, the Zensters never quite get to laugh-out-loud funny, although cuts like "I Am A Freak In A Deadhead's Body" and "She's My Girl" qualify as amusing. The rest of this 6-song EP traffics in winsome love songs that might be a bit more compelling if the band could capture its wacky personality on disc more forcefully. As is, this falls somewhere a little above lame but not quite recommended. - Jim T.

ZOINKS! - *Well And Good* (Dr. Strange) The band is back to being a threesome after the recent departure of guitarist, Zac, who seemed to handle the bulk of the singing and songwriting duties. Fortunately, the remaining band members have taken up the slack so that this 12 song disc sounds remarkably like their previous records. About the only differences this time 'round is that the vocals sound a bit more British and the song structures are slightly more complex at times. Overall I would say that this recording is a notch below their previous efforts,

but Zoinks! remains one of the better pop punk bands around today. - Rick Spithoff

COMPILATIONS

ABC'S OF PUNK (Whirled Records, PO Box 5431, Richmond VA 23220) I didn't even get the concept of this CD when I first listened to it, I just enjoyed checking out the bands, many of which I'd been hearing about but not actually heard. Then after looking at the back cover, I got it - there are 26 bands here and each name starts with a different letter of the alphabet. The ABC's Of Punk... duh. Well, kudos to the Whirled Records folks for putting this together, with lots of today's primo hardcore acts including Rye Coalition, Men's Recovery Project, Action Patrol, and Braid, as well as poppy punkers like Less Than Jake and Zoinks. - Johnny Puke
Among the twenty six tracks, I enjoyed J Church for the poppy punk, cute subject friendly voice; Less Than Jake for their awesome ska-punk tune that just makes you want to get up and skank; the Norman Mayer Group for their Sonic Youth-like drum beat; Oblivion with "Hey Chewbacca" - fast fun pop punk about Star Wars; Rye Coalition with "We Have Ridden". I never thought I'd like this Techno-ish beat without vocals of any kind, but it's good stuff; Sleepytime Trio - hardcore with minimal screaming but overall good beat and music; Vanbuilderass - female vocals over a pop punk beat; and Zoinks! - good melody with another pop punk rhythm and a happy smile. - Eva S.

BEST OF THE BEST - "A Punk Rock Compilation" (Awesome D Records, Indian Quad Box 2139, SUNY Albany, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany NY 12222) This is one of the best comps I have heard in a while. 37 bands playing 37 songs that are all straight up punk rock! There are a lot of good bands on this comp. like the DROPKICK MURPHYS, THE INJECTIONS, SHOWCASE SHOWDOWN, LOUNGE, BLANKS 77, THE UPSETS, and DON'T ASK ALEX. The best part about this comp. is that most of the bands are east coast (which means they are good) and that they will probably be coming around my area to play shows quite a bit. The quality on a couple of songs is not the best but hey, what do ya want, it's only \$5ppd! Go put 5 bux in an envelope and send it to the above address for one of the best punk as fuck comp there is. - Conor Moore

CHORD - "Sampler #12" (Chord/Too Damn Hype, P.O. Box 15793, Philadelphia PA 19103) This one really ain't my cup of tea. 24 bands (Breakdown, The Outpatients, Stampin' Ground, Acme, to name a few) playing hardcore/metal with screaming vocals. On the up side though, it does come with a excellent 'zine with interviews with the Misfits, Mighty Bosstones, The Get Up Kids, and Pennywise. I'd buy this one for the 'zine alone. - Conor Moore

CINEMA BEER NUTS - The Original Punk Rock Taste (Hopeless Records, P.O. Box 7495, Van Nuys CA 91409-7495) Damn, this is the best

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comp I have heard in a while. 19 bands w/19 songs and they all fucking rock. This has got everything from punk (Vandals, Nobodys, Milencolin, Shades Apart) to ska (Mustard Plug, Less Than Jake, Assorted Jelly Beans, Voodoo Glow Skulls, Link 80) to hardcore (Strife, AFI, Ignite) to pop punk (MxPx, The Queers, Hi Standard). This one is also available on video as well as CD. Go get this one now! I love it! - Conor Moore

EVERYBODY WANTS SOME: A Tribute To Van Halen (Cherry Disc, POB 990424, Boston MA 02199) This is a collection of various Boston bands doing their best to pay tribute to Van Halen. Most of the covers focus on the "old" VH. In fact, only one is from the Hagar era. From the opening track of "Eruption" played on an organ to the final track of "Eruption" played on a banjo, this is a good CD. The delicate treatment of "Jump" turns the pop song into a love song. It's my personal favorite as Mary Lou Lord's vocals are on the mark. The rest ranges from jazzy treatments to punk versions of some of VH's best material. - Paul Hanson

FLYIN' TRAPS (Hollywood Records) You know the old joke: "What's the name of the guy who hangs out with the band? -- The Drummer!". On this CD, the drummers of some of your favorite bands have put together some songs to make you choke on your obtuse humor. Matt Cameron, Tan Bentley, Steven Perkins, J-Mascis, Alexis Fleisig, Josh Freese, Tim Alexander, Chris Vrenna and Dale Grover are all here to lay waste to the myth that drummers is dumb. There is great stuff on here and not to worry, this is not just drums, there all full songs except for two. You should buy this, even if you can only play guitar. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

GODMONEY - Soundtrack (V2 Records, 14 E. 4th St., New York NY 10012) Well with any major movie soundtrack, you get a couple of good songs (if you're lucky) and a bunch of bad ones but this one is different - it's all good. Some of the best bands on here include Pennywise, MxPx, Descendents, Down By Law, Blink 182, AFI, Ten Foot Pole, VGS, and Strife. Hearing this soundtrack really makes me want to go check this movie out. The singer from Strife stars in the movie so if it comes around, check it out and if you like the music, then go get this. - Conor Moore

GOLDEN SHOWER OF 72 HITS (Lost & Found) This German label should be praised for it's continuing preservation of hardcore. Going down the list of bands, it's easy to see all the stages of hardcore: Killing Time, Uniform Choice, Ignite, Crown Of Thornz, Sick Of It All, American Standard, and Brightside (this is just the first disk). 72 bands/songs, 2 CD's and only \$15 bucks is a very wonderful thing. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

A HARD NIGHT'S DAY (MCA) This is a two-disc collection of 45 songs that changed the face of the music industry in the late 70s and early 80s - a compilation of the music of Stiff Records, that independent record label out of the UK that brought us such groups as the Damned, the Pogues, Ian Dury and the Blockheads, Devo, Madness, Nick Lowe, Kristy MacColl, and on and on. Many groups here were relatively short-lived and never became well-known outside the UK. Others hit it big, so to speak. This is a collection of some of the best, most original and ground-breaking pop music to come out of the UK from that era. This is the groundwork for everything that came after. This is a must have collection. - Paul Silver

HELL ON EARTH ... HAIL TO THE MISFITS (Tribute Records) In the wake of the *Violent World* (Caroline) tribute comes something a little more twisted. I can say this is the European version of the tribute. I only recognized two bands on this Entombed and Gehedrah, so I knew this would be heavier, and I was right. Mostly bad, it did have its (hybrid) moments. Many of the bands were formed specifically for this (with names like Wolfpack, 69 Eyes, Astrozombies.) That in essence makes this from fans for fans. It's nice to see your favorite band given a tribute, but not for \$20 a pop. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

IT'S ALL ABOUT SUPPORTING THE SCENE (Violation Records, 1689 N. Hiatus Rd. #237, Pembroke Pines FL 33036) This is what I like: a compilation comprised of bands from around the country with one thing in common - no one has heard of them. Each of these bands are concerned with the unification of their individual scenes and the punk/hardcore movement in general. The frustration of the members can be heard in each of the tracks here. The disc is based on a noble cause and displays an impressive array of talent. The Disfunctionals from Sherwood, Illinois kick things off with a speedy, driving track called "We'll Never Be the Same", which would make an accurate theme song for this compilation. Other cuts of mention are chipped in by Florida's Medicine Ball, California-based Nothing Yet ("Fight,") and Belle Mead, New Jersey's Mohawk Barbie. Maryland's Bionic Man and a pair of Pennsylvania acts, Lynchpin and Savage 3-D, whose "My World" is one of the top cuts on the disc, also contribute catchy, well-crafted pnk. My personal favorites were from the rousing bottom heavy growls of The Unemployed (Katona, Ky.) with "Enemy" and the more eclectic Gonemad. You may have to search a little

to find this, but it is easily worth the extra work. - Rich Quinlan

MODERN DAY PAINTINGS BY ORIGINAL MUSICAL ARTISTS (Fingerpaint Records, PO Box 277 New York, NY 10012) The effectiveness of various artists anthology albums depends largely upon the cohesiveness of the package itself. As a general rule of thumb compilations work best when they're very consistent. This odds and ends collection is a good case in point. The songs contained herein are generally of sound quality -- Beck's slow, bluesy lament "Lampshade," the Campfire Girls' wonderfully wacky "Perry Farrell Ate My Girlfriend," the punchy, powerful punk anthems "Stupid Sammy" by Lifter and "Quiet Riot Grrr!" by Further, Holiday Flyer's quite pretty and affecting pop outing "Roll Those Eyes Over Here," and the Mooks' exceptionally groovy, sultry, languorous lounge music masterpiece "Big Bossa Man" are the strongest cuts -- but the miscellaneous across-the-music-genre approach creates a jarring erratic tone which prevents this comp from seriously cooking. Still well worth a listen, but the extremely uneven and inconsistent hodgepodge approach ensures that the whole enterprise can never really zero in on a specific focus and be a thoroughly satisfying success. - Joe Wawryzniak

MORE KAOS (Motherbox Records, 60 Denton Avenue, East Rockaway, New York 11518) Motherbox has provided you with one outstanding compilation. I realize that you can spend days fishing through all of the new comps coming out today, but trust me; get this! More Kaos is thirty songs of various styles of hardcore, from the raw aggression of The 22's, Violent Society, and the Striped Bastards to the poppy goodness of bands like The McRackins and Willis, whose "Living Free" is one of my favorite songs of the year. You are even treated to a little ska compliments of Skazel Tov! and Heft. Other highlights include Flag of Democracy ("Punk Gun"), Fun Girls from Mt. Pilot ("Janelle's At the Mall"), Narcissistic Fred ("Sleep"), Felix Frump ("Grandpa was Punk Rock") and Latex Generation ("Daddy Was A Communist"). There is nothing else than can be said. This is an amazing compilation full of talented, fun, heavy and unique punk bands from a hard working little label. Get this as soon as you can. - Rich Q.

NOT THE SAME OLD BLUES CRAP (Fat Possum/Epitaph) To quote the writing on the CD: "Music so strong it'll pull panties off a nun". Fat Possum delivers crazy blues to crazy people and the young crazy people at that. If you are getting interested in blues music of an up tempoed nature then get an album from this label, I haven't been disappointed yet. R.L. Burnside, Junior Kimbrough, T-Model Ford and Jelly Roll Kings are all here. - Gary McGarvey Jr.

SCENES, WHAT SCENE? - A TEXAS COMPILATION (Pinche FloJo Records, POB 431212 Houston, TX 77243-1212) Of the stuff on here, some notables were: Missile Command's Victory at Sea, Rebel Crew's Tuff Ting - a ska/funk hybrid w/ an electronic slant to it, Drum's "The Answer" - was it ska or Phil Collins? and my fave, SuperZero's "Standing Alone". Some of the ska on this just doesn't live up to the originals. - Tom Brebric

SPACE GHOST'S MUSICAL BAR-B-QUE (Kid Rhino) NOTE: Since this is a kid's CD, I'll use excessive foul language. I don't give a shit how old you fucking are, motherfuckin' Space Ghost's *Cartoon Planet* is goddamn funny (in its own fractured way). This CD has many of the silly (fucked up) songs and sketches that make the show pies-in-your-pants hilarious - especially Brak, (played by Andy Merrill). This is a shit-stainedly great companion to the (enter genital word here)-sucking show. (TV-Y7 version of this review is also available for \$1 sent to JERSEY BEAT) - Gary McGarvey Jr.

TAKE WARNING: The Songs Of Operation Ivy (Glue Factory, PO Box 404, Redondo Beach CA 90277) In a year when there was more ska than you could shake a porkpie hat at, it's nice to see some of today's young'uns pay homage to the pop-punksters who played such a huge role in bringing ska into the punk underground. The two "big" bands on this comp take different tacks - Reel Big Fish do up "Unity" the right way (they play it every night on tour, too) whereas the Aquabats take "Knowledge" and turn it into a joke. (Then again, most kids probably think it's a Green Day song by now anyway.) The underground, mostly OC Calipunk bands that fill up the rest of this comp do largely faithful versions, with quite a few adding horns. My Superhero's "Big City," Teen Heroes' "Smiling" and Homegrown's "Bombshell" will have you skanking around your bedroom in your jammies quicker'n you can say Lint Rules. - Jim T.

THAT WAS NOW, THIS IS THEN - A Punk Rock Retro-Spectacular (V.M.L., P.O. Box 183, Franklin Park IL 60131) A hell of an idea 20 years in the making put together by Joey Vindictive. Current bands (such as the Teen Idols, Showcase Showdown, Less Than Jake, The Nobodys, and the Quincy Punx, to name a few on the comp.) play their favorite punkrock song from 1977 with their own little treats added in. Some of the original bands being covered include The Real Kids, The Saints, The Jam, The Clash, and Violent Society to name a few. This one should put a smile on the faces of

old schoolers and new schoolers alike, go check this one out now. - Conor Moore

THEY CAME FROM MASSACHUSETTS (Big Wheel Recording, 325 Huntington Ave. #29, Boston, MA 02115) A 19-band compilation. It's got everything from Emo to Hardcore to Punk, and regular rock. It's all right but the only 3 bands that stuck out in my mind were 454 Big Block, Blood for Blood, and Cast Iron Hike (who do an amazing cover of GG Allin's "Shoot, Knife, Strangle, Beat, and Crucify." - Phil Pinto

UNITED KINGDOM OF PUNK (Music Club) The punk 70s revisited once again. A fine collection of mostly live performances by all the big names of the time such as Damned, Buzzcocks, Sham69, XRay Spex, all of whom will probably be coming to a venue near you for a reunion show. This collection is a bit different in that it's broken up with non punk bands such as Spizz Energy and Eddie and the Hotrods, and some lesser known bands such as the Only Ones. Brought back goods memories of long ago. - Tom Brebrie

WE ARE NOT DEVO - "A Tribute To Devo" (Centipede Records, P.O. Box 691691, West Hollywood CA 90069) Well, if you like Devo, go pick this one up. I am not really familiar with Devo but this one is pretty good anyways. It also has some great bands on it (SNFU, FACE TO FACE, THE AQUABATS, VODOO GLOW SKULLS, THE VANDALS, LAGWAGON). If you like Devo or any of the above mentioned bands, go check this out. - Conor Moore

WE WILL FALL - A TRIBUTE TO IGGY POP (Royalty Records, 176 Madison Avenue 4TH Floor, New York, NY 10016) James Osterberg has been responsible for some of the true punk anthems of all time, and this brilliantly organized tribute record features bands that are clearly fans of the great Iggy Pop. The acts here do a remarkable job on each track, staying true to the original yet still adding their own touches. The twenty songs here display various points of Iggy's career, from his days as the lead Stooge through his sometimes confusing solo career. This masterpiece begins with Joey Ramone crushing "1969". The Red Hot Chili Peppers do a surprisingly furious version of "Search and Destroy". Other impressive efforts are donated by Pansy Division ("Loose"), Nada Surf ("Sick Of You"), D Generation ("I Got Nothing") Jayne County ("Down On The Street/Little

Doll") and the Lunachicks ("Passenger"). This is one of the finest tribute records I have heard in a long time. This should make Iggy proud. Smother yourself in peanut butter and enjoy! - Rich Quinlan

WHATS MINE IS YOURS (Deep Elm, PO Box 1965, New York NY 10156) Deep Elm has taken twelve bands that embody the sense of passion and fluid playing that defines emo and placed them on one very impressive compilation. I do not consider myself a big emo fan, but was very impressed with the majority of the material here, and became much more interested after a few listens. The disc gets off to a somewhat repetitive start, with the majority of the bands going for a similar sound, and not playing much emphasis on lyrics. However, Race Car Riot and Lazycain do display marvelous skills and true heartfelt pride in what they are creating. My attitude about this record changed drastically after the sixth track "Ordinary Life" from Samiam. Samiam generates energy and a more distinctive sound. Unlike many emo bands, a Samiam song is instantly recognizable. Things only get better from there with outstanding contributions from Rain Still Falls, (the amazingly beautiful "Beginner Swimmer"), one of my personal favorites. Jejuné, Triplefastaction and Red Level whose "Turn It On" has both punch and harmony. The disc concludes with a lovely track from the now-disbanded Pohogoh. "Friend X" is haunting and a perfect way to close the compilation. The majority of the material here is either unreleased or impossible to find, and Deep Elm does a wonderful job in displaying bands from around the country. While some of this was a little repetitive, in the end, What's Mine is Yours places a spotlight on the beauty and uniqueness that is emo. All devout fans need this, and for people like myself, this is a great starting point. -Rich Q.

WHERE'S THE BEEF? (Drive Thru Records, P.O. Box 461115, Hollywood CA 90046) This is one of the best comps I have ever heard. Great blend of punk, ska, pop and emo to make everyone happy. If you like ska, go check this one out, tons of great ska bands to make you wanna skank everywhere ya go. This one's got many unreleased tracks that you won't be able to find anywhere else by the likes of Less Than Jake, Goldfinger, Riverfenix, Bracket, The Get Up Kids, and The Broadways. Also comes with a cheesy but good 'zine with interviews with Less Than Jake, Nofx, Weezer, and Superchunk. This one is a hell of a deal which I can't see being around for very long so hurry up and order one. - Conor Moore



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JERSEY BEAT BACK ISSUES

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Zine reviews by Jim Testa unless indicated otherwise.

664 ZINE #1 (1775 Bard Lane, East Meadow NY 11554, \$1) I usually heave at the sight of photocopied photos, but the pix in this zine have a cool grainy look that I kind of like and which complements the imaginative layouts. All the usuals but better than average - columns, interviews (Kiss It Goodbye, Charles Bronson, By The Grace Of God, Sick Of It All, Torches To Rome), reviews.

ANGELHEART #8 (J-P Muikku, Kotaniementie 47, FIN-83960 Koli, Finland - \$2 or 3 IRC) The tiny type through most of this was too small for me to read, but it's written in English and seems to focus on underground metal and hardcore, with opinion pieces on animal rights, feminism, veganism, etc. Plus where else are you going to read interviews with Finnish bands?

APPLE BROWN BETTY #5 (PO Box 245, Montvale NJ 07645 \$1) Half size punkzine with pretty sloppy layouts and crude graphics, making it look like it was just tossed together. But the interviews aren't bad, and it's a way to check on some underground HC bands like Fieldstrip and Wormbath, plus lots of short columns and pieces voicing the editor & his friends' feelings on different topics. #4 has thoughts on *Roseanne's* last season, interviews with Egghead and Little Turkey, and reviews.

BASIC MOTOR SKILLS ZINE #1 (tracy@upstatepress.com) Nice layout- done on a Mac w/ Trebuchet font. A story about the KillZinesters tour, info on creating a basic web site, a search engine for DIY info. My fave was a story about someone who calls in sick to his job and spends his time banging whores. A good start, but a bit thin for \$1.50. - Tom B.

THE BIG TAKEOVER #41 (249 Eldridge St. #14, NYC 10002 - \$4.50) Before you blink at the price, let me point out that this issue runs 225 pages. That's about 3 average zines' worth (or two Jersey Beats and change) so you're getting your money's worth. Jack and his impeccable staff continue to search for "music with heart," this time focusing on the Sebadoh/Folk Implosion family, as well as Billy Bragg, Descendents, Gene, Robyn Hitchcock, Jello Biafra, and so much more, including a reviews section that reads like a cross between the Trouser Press Record Guide and the Encyclopedia Britannica. Seminal. Buy one, leave it in the john, and you'll have something worthwhile to read for a month.

BUS 6 #1 (Laura, PO Box 71, Princeton Jct. NJ 08550 - \$1+2 stamps) Formerly called Lunatic Fringe. A mostly personal zine about high-schooler Laura's daily travails. Nothing thrilling here but it has that intimate feeling (like reading a stranger's diary) that perzines can deliver.

CLE (PO Box 16613, Cleveland OH 44116,) Cleveland rocks and so does this great-looking and well-written new zine. Lots of original art, original fiction and comics, Cleveland bands (from garage-

rockers the Revelers to noise-hounds Craw to the ageless Starvation Army)... and issue #5 comes with a 2-CD compilation including the DuValby Brothers, Ugly Beauty, Biblical Proof of UFOs, Craw, and the Revelers. Outstanding.

COOL BEANS #7 (3181 Mission #113, San Francisco CA 94110, \$4) A great looking and well written zine that's become one of my favorites. Comes with a compilation flexidisc. Highlights include the bike tour of San Francisco, My Bloody Valentine interview, and "Selling Sex in San Francisco."

CORRALLINE #3 (Dave Shearer, 184 Munger Ave., Marlton NJ 08053 - \$1) Not much here - reviews of a few records that the editor seems to have picked up at the store, uninspired interviews with ska and punk bands, no photos, and very unimaginative layouts. Ho hum.

CRUCIAL TIMES (PO Box 190, Shawnee-on-Delaware PA 18356; send some stamps) A newsletter, published more or less monthly, by Chris Francz, devoted to the Poconos scene with a special emphasis on Christian hardcore. Chris doesn't shove his religion down your throat, although he makes you aware of his beliefs, making this an interesting and rewarding look into another corner of the multi-faceted punk underground.

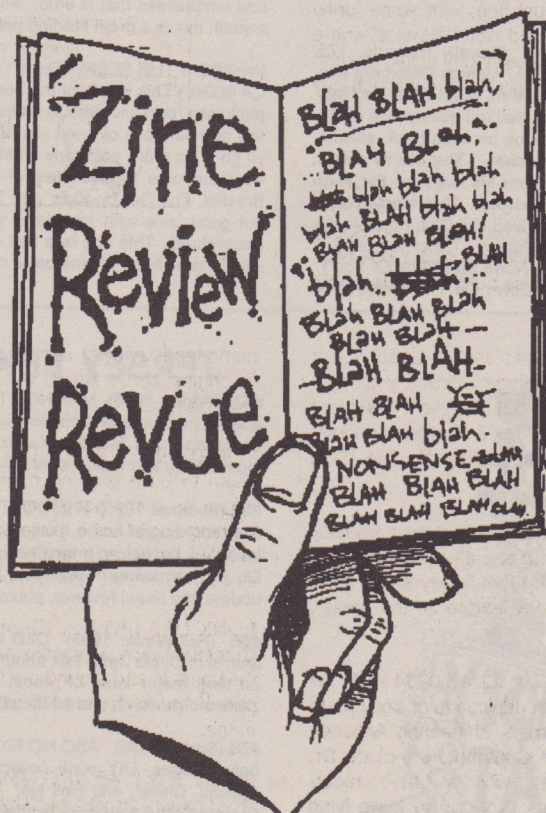
DANSE ASSEMBLY Magazine (DAMn) #14 (PO Box 2231, Neptune City NJ 07754 \$2) Mick Hale's bi-monthly compendium of the newest sounds from the techno/industrial/ambient underground. This issue includes coverage of the recent controversy over the Sisters of Mercy's recent Philadelphia concert (in which several opening bands were booted off the bill by SoM's Andrew Eldritch for being "too goth,") and interview with Orbital, features on Covenant, the Aggression, and Faith And The Muse, and lots of reviews.

FLASHING ASTONISHER #9/10 (\$2 from POB 70, Syracuse, NY 13210-0070) Hey, even if they didn't give Jersey Beat a good review, I have to say this zine has improved since the last time (a year ago) that I saw it. Tales of girls hitting the bar for

free drinks, dealing with magazine rejections, best of past issues and the usual reviews. - Tom B. #10 includes a bunch of short essays that range from a piece on Mars' geography to a rant on voting to a bitch about Kinko's, plus a lot of opinionated reviews.

GLOSSOLALIA #7 (4470 W. Sunset Blvd. #425, Hollywood CA 90027; \$2) "Punk, porn, and politics" is what it says on the cover and that's what you get: An inside look at the porn industry and reviews of some porno videos; a classical musician (the editor's dad) explains why rock sucks; an interview with the Lazy Cowgirls' Pat Todd and a reviews section (that's the punk part;) a sarcastic description of "a San Francisco liberal" (there's your politics;) and some racy fiction.

GONE #2 (Larry Grogan, 45 Gordon St., South River NJ 08882, \$1)



GONE #2 (Larry Grogan, 45 Gordon St., South River NJ 08882, \$1) Larry Grogan used to be king of the Jersey garage scene. These days, he's listening to (and writing about) blues and jazz. But he could do a butterfly-collecting zine and I'd read it, because he's such an entertaining writer. Still, this is so focused that if you're not into jazz, you probably won't find this of much interest.

GOT THAT? #6 (Joe Ancien, 25 Union Square West, C2-8FB, New York NY 10003) This is a halfsized personal/punk zine that will take you from the end of the editor's high school days in Hong Kong (!) to his summer in Ohio to his freshman year at NYU in NYC. Wow. Along the way there reviews of punk shows (so you can experience the difference between a punk show in Hong Kong and one in NYC) and Joe's feelings about the changes in his life.

GLUTTON FOR PUNISHMENT #2 (Reese Ikler, PO Box 15295, San Francisco CA 94115 \$1) Halfsize punkzine with a lot of sexy stuff, including kinky femmes-in-bondage clipart. Feminists be warned.

GO METRIC #8 (c/o Egghead, PO Box 250878, NYC 10025 - 1 stamp) The newsletter of the NYC sillypunk band Egghead, although this stands on its own as a zine just fine, with some funny bits (like "why you really like Huey Lewis and won't admit it" and a homage to Winona Ryder). There's a hilarious phony cover you can wrap around this so it looks like you're actually reading a tough-guy hardcore zine.

GRACIOUS #3 (Zak Kindrachuk, 106 Meeshaway Trail, Medford Lks NJ 08055; \$3) A newsprint punkzine with a long article on government conspiracies, massacres, and coverups; interviews with Ten Yard Fight, Prema, Promise Ring, and Bouncing Souls, thoughts on punk, image, and friendship, reviews, and a look back at Jawbreaker. The zine definitely has promise but it could use more of a personal touch.

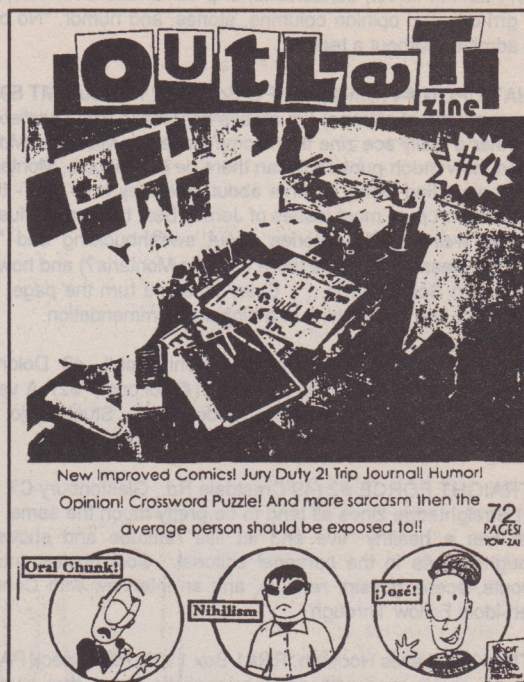
HODGEPODGE #2 (Mike Schade, 432 Red Jacket Quad SUNY Buffalo, Buffalo NY 14261; since this is a college address, you might want to email first to: cestpodge@aol.com - \$2) Excellent newsprint hardcore/punk zine. By The Grace of God, Ink & Dagger, Antidote, and Monster X interviews; lots of reviews; and terrific live band photos.

KEYHOLES Vol. 2, No. 1 (Email: jajoog@aol.com) Joann Jovinelly is a new contributor here at Jersey Beat but she also publishes her own mini-zine, largely dedicated to covering the Jersey shore band scene: Backhand, Ropetree, Solace, and a feature on the Asbury Park Music Awards.

MALEFACT #4 (P.O.B. 464, Alexandria, VA 22313-0464 - \$5) An art/cartoon 'zine for the truly deranged with depictions of body parts being lopped off, sex with children & animals, shit-eating Antiseen photos... the depravity just doesn't stop. Contributors include Dr. Randall Phillip, Trevor Brown, Fanatik, etc. I wonder if their readership base is prisons and mental hospitals. Not one to leave lying around on your office desk. - Tom Brebric

MOTION SICKNESS #5 (PO Box 24277, St. Louis MO 63130, \$2) This newsprint punkzine actually reminds me of Jersey Beat, except it has a few features we haven't gotten around to yet. You've got some opinionated columns, intelligent Q&A interviews (Lunachicks, UK Subs, Quincy Punx, Naked Aggression, and NJ's own Blanks 77, to name a few,) a funny story about the editor's quest to the Milwaukee Metal Fest, reviews, and good live photos. Then there's a piece on veganism and good nutrition, a political piece on why you should boycott certain corporations, and a St. Louis Scene Report. Very very recommended.

OUTLET #4 (Stephen DiSebastian, 13 Azalea Dr., Sicklerville NJ 08081) A personal zine published by the singer of Unclench (see



demo tape reviews) with short stories, diaries, and opinions as well as original comic strips. A big fat zine with lots of read and plenty to think about.

POOPSHEET #17 (PO Box 161095, Ft Worth TX 76161 \$2) There seem to be a growing number of zine-review zines, probably because so many people are fed up with the way Seth Friedman is running Factsheet 5 these days. Anyway - here's another one. Lots of titles I'd never heard of before, so if you love shopping for new zines, this is worth the two bucks.

PUNK LIFE (PO Box 15, Arlington VA 22210 \$1) This is sort of a Cometbus-type personal zine, except the whole issue is about taking the trains in and around the D.C. metro area. I guess mass transit is part of "punk life" but 125 pages on the topic seems a bit obsessive to me.

PUNK RAG #5 (PO Box 6332, Longmont CO 80501, \$1) Newspaper-format zine (like Slug & Lettuce). Columns, interviews with the Fiendz and the Chubbies, a piece explaining veganism, reviews.

QUADROCEPTIVE INFINITATION #3 (RR#1 Box 1168, Nescopeck PA 18635, \$1) The editor also does the comiczine Stuck (see review below.) There's a short interview with Good Riddance, reviews, and a long section where the editor just rambles and shares his thoughts (by far the best part of the zine.) Lots of zine reviews too.

QUIRKY SCRIBBLES #3 (PO Box 18404, Irvine CA 92623, 3 stamps or trade) Short stories, reviews, stuff on local bands, very teen oriented.

RIOT DUCK #2 (501 James Way, Wyckoff NJ 07481 \$1) This

half-sized punkzine is done by Eva Silverman, Jersey Beat's resident riot girl, and has interviews with some of her fave bands (Dan Bern, Fur, Plan A Project, Lunachicks) and some record reviews, as well as girl-oriented opinion columns, stories, and humor. "No one over 18 admitted without a teen."

SHAT UPON #4 (Smetanka, PO Box 9081, Missoula MT 59802 \$2 plus a couple of stamps) I'm always impressed when someone puts together a really ace zine from some place like Missoula, Montana. I mean, how much punk rock can there be in Missoula, Montana? Yet these guys find plenty to write about, and they write well - the local scene report puts most issues of Jersey Beat to shame. Plus there's all this *weird* stuff - stories about swashbuckling and "Finnish drinking pleasantries" (are there Finns in Montana?) and how to be a swinger in Scandinavia... Every time you turn the page, you get surprised, and I can't think of a higher recommendation.

SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM #8 (Rohit Kohli, 43 Dolores Dr., Metuchen NJ 08840; email brownguy1@aol.com; \$2) A very good looking offset zine focusing on harder stuff - Stuck Mojo, Clutch, Coal Chamber, etc. plus a good reviews section.

STRAIGHT FORCE #2 (49 Crestdale Rd., Glastonbury CT 06033, \$2) Straightedge zines all tend to be pretty much the same, but this one has a healthy "live and let live" attitude and shows some thoughtfulness in the personal editorial. Cool photos, interesting layouts, scene gossip, reviews, and an interview with Connecticut teen-idols Follow Through.

STUCK #1 (Lewis Houston, RR#1 Box 1168, Nescopeck PA 18635, \$1) A comic zine with short surrealistic strips that capture the pathos and angst of high school. Around the comics there are lines from songs that help illustrate the point. Cool. (Comes with a free "Geek" patch.)

TAILSPINS #29 (PO Box 1860, Evanston IL 60204, \$3) One of the most well written and reliable zines around, mixing music with offbeat cultural pieces. This issue has an anthropological article on "the wild boy of Aveyron," interviews with Los Straitjackets and the Spiderbabies, a piece on blaxploitation flick, why clowns are more scary than funny, and lots more, including a huge reviews section.

UFS #3 (Jorge Sandoval, 665 NW 126 Ct., Miami FL 33182, \$1) Offset punkzine with the usuals: columns, band interviews, show reviews, photos, comix, record & zine reviews. On the plus side, I enjoyed Jorge's enthusiasm - at least he isn't a jaded old crustacean like me - and any kid with the balls to interview Chris from the Pink Lincolns is plenty punk in my book.

UNADULTERATED #1 (Mary, 540 South Creek Rd., Racine WI 53402, \$1 + 2 stamps) Mary is an opinionated young woman who, in her first zine, sounds off on some of the things that bother her (homophobia, racism, people giving lip service to feminism.) There are also some Emily Dickinson poems which impressed her, a couple of reviews, and a lot of ads for other zines.

UNDER THE VOLCANO #39/40 (\$2 to Vital Music Mailorder, PO Box 210, New York NY 10276) Rich Black keeps cranking these out with such consistency that he's gonna pass me in the issue number department soon. #39 of Long Island's best regularly-published zine includes Electric Frankenstein, the Dismemberment Plan, Fearless Records, the Makers, Squatweiler, Ozzfest review, reviews, columns. #40 has more solid interviews (Blanks 77, Down By Law's Dave Smalley, Kill Your Idols.) Every issue features the Kaos LI scene report, reviews, and a few meat 'n' potatoes columns.

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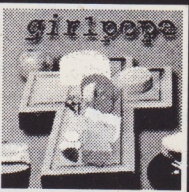
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